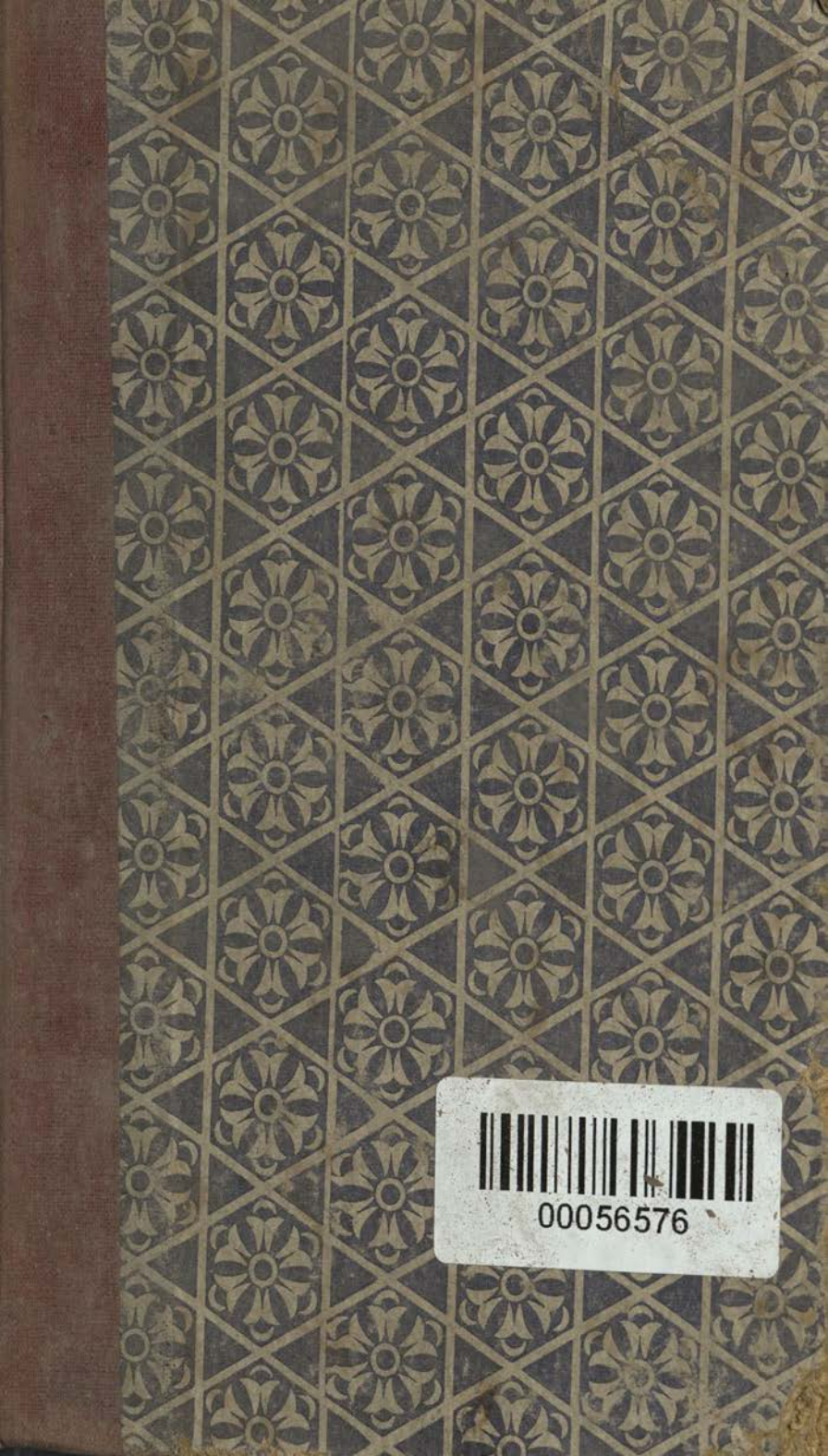
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# A Calendar and Diary

BY

PERCIVAL C. SCOTT O'CONNOR
(S.R.D.)

*Illustrated from Photographs taken by the Author*

"And each in his separate star
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It, for the God of Things as they are."

1908

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# Dedication

TO THE
SILENT PATIENT PEOPLE OF
VILLAGES AND FIELDS, WHOSE
VOICES MAKE SO FAINT A STIR IN THE
CLAMOUR OF THE TIMES
THIS BOOK IS
DEDICATED

# PREFACE

INDIA is a large country—almost a continent—and the conditions prevailing in one part are not to be applied to the whole. It is, therefore, necessary to mention that the sketches here following refer entirely to the central districts of the United Provinces; the very kernel of Hindustan. For nine months in every year I have toured through these districts, covering in all some 25,000 miles on horseback. During the winter months, when the country is refreshingly green and the air cold and bracing, life under canvas is wholly enjoyable; but from April onwards to June every day passed under canvas is a week off one's life.

The discomforts and hardships, the heat, the dust, the storms are beyond description.

The greater part of these sketches appeared in the *Pioneer* newspaper; one on Fort Rooyah in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, and my thanks are due for permission to make use of them here.

## A CALENDAR

| WINTER | SUMMER | MONSOON OR RAINS |
|---|---|---|
| October—Warm and steamy | April—Hot | July—Cool and beautiful |
| November—Cool | May—Hotter | August—Hot and steamy |
| December—Cold | June—H—— | September—Warm and unhealthy |
| January—Frosty | | |
| February—Balmy | | |
| March—Warm and Windy | | |

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# THE INDIAN COUNTRYSIDE

## OCTOBER

"A pleasure in the pathless woods,
A rapture on the lonely shore."

We have been most busy the past fortnight in camp attending to the repairs to the tents and the overhauling of the camp furniture. For eight long hours daily the bang of the carpenter's hammer has played upon the tympanum of our ears, while the smell of paint and varnish has so diffused itself into the surrounding atmosphere that, even here, ten miles away, the air appears to be tainted with the haunting odour.

We were up betimes this morning, the 1st of October, and arrived in camp about eight o'clock, feeling fresh and invigorated after the long drive in the cool air.

The camp is pitched in a great picturesque spot on the banks of a stream, and is shaded by huge spreading *bohr* trees. Hard by stand the creeper-wrapped ruins of an old staging bungalow, which dates back to the posting days, when people journeyed by horse-dák for months together, and shot tigers from their carriage windows. In those halcyon times, of which our ancients are wont to speak, the road, near which we are to-day encamped, must have hummed with traffic. Now, all is changed. A few dusty wayfarers and an occasional bullock-cart are all that is to be seen during the hours of daylight, while at night the long white streak of the road sleeps in silence and

peace. The tiger-infested jungles of former years have been swept away, and have given place to smiling fields and peaceful homesteads where Ram Bux's children now wander at will.

A stone's throw from the camp stands the old wooden bridge, cracked and scarred with age; but there is another one now, a gorgeous iron structure, over which the trains pass and roar the livelong day.

Black and grey partridge.

On our arrival here this morning we heard the black partridge calling in the scrub on the further bank. Like my neighbours of the soil, these birds are given to sunning themselves in the open on cold winter mornings, and it is while in the enjoyment of the sun-bath that they call most frequently. If chance should lead your footsteps into the jungle at sunrise you will hear the familiar call—

"*Subhan teri qudrat*"
(O God! Great is thy might)

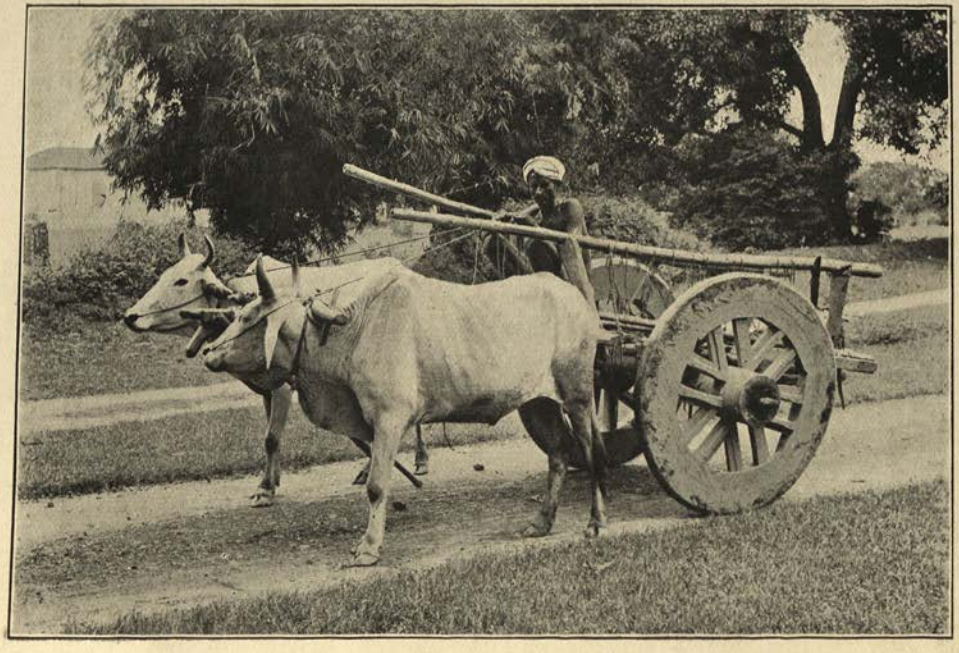
rising from the bushes in all directions; but a couple of hours later not a bird is to be heard, and so quiet lies the jungle that the inexperienced sportsman would be likely to pass by, little dreaming of the sport he was losing. The grey partridge, on the other hand, is the boldest of birds, and, like the proverbial Irishman, is ever ready for a fight. At any hour of the day you may hear him shouting out his

"*tea-or-cocoa, tea-or-cocoa*"

challenge to the champions in all the fields around.

Two points of view.

With the advent of October the heart of the white man rejoices at the prospect of what we call, in this country, "the cold weather;" but Ram Bux is not quite so pleased. A month or two hence, when the biting winds whip his unclad limbs, he will be all but a frozen corpse, with just sufficient



A BULLOCK CART. [*To face p.* 5

animation remaining to enable him to crawl out into the all-warming sun, and there to pour out his praises, with chattering teeth, to the Great Dispenser of light and warmth. Very soon there will be long chains of carts and camels radiating from the heart-centres of districts to the uttermost corners, and large camps of white tents will spring up in village groves, as if by magic, in the course of a single night. Then the wily cartman, fearful of being impressed, will spend some of his summer savings on wheel grease in the hope that he may be able to slink past the camps of the white lords, unobserved, during the dark watches of the night.

Health in October.

October has an evil name in the plains, but, personally, I have never found it unhealthy; in fact, as soon as October dawns, my magazine of physic is put away, buried

out of sight for nine whole months. Then when the "trades" blow again the physic comes forth with the frogs, and life becomes a wearisome burden.

The hill sparrow.

I am writing in the shade of the *bohr* trees to the accompaniment of the sweet chatter of the earliest of our winter friends—the hill sparrow. No believer in lights under bushels, he perches himself, when festively inclined, on the topmost bough of a tree and carols by the hour. I see him now, atop of an acacia at the water's edge, warbling as if for a wager. Sweet little bird! His suit may be homely, but we love him because he brings us glad tidings of coming winter.

Cranes, ducks and geese.

Mingled with his song comes the discordant cry of the demoiselle crane, wheeling in mid-heaven. She, too, is a new arrival from northern climes. Our quacking friends of the *jheels* (winter lakes) have not yet arrived,

but we expect them very shortly. I saw some birds on the water this morning. Were they new arrivals, or have they been with us all through the blistering heat of summer, nursing their winter wounds? What, I wonder, are the feelings of a wounded bird, unable at the close of the winter season to join his companions in the long flight to their mountain home? Often he escapes the clutches of the bloodthirsty sportsman only to fall a prey to the prowling jackal or the sharp-taloned hawk, when the country, sun-scorched and wind-swept, affords no shelter.

Deer. And this reminds me of the deer and antelope. Another month and they must leave their sheltered haunts among the *juar* fields and trust to their wit in the open ground. Like my Aryan brother, they, too, have a poor prospect before them; but in the succulent wheat and in the grain fields

they will, I hope, find some compensation.

Early days in camp.

The change from an old ramshackle bungalow to tents is pleasant, though the heat in the afternoons is still somewhat disagreeable. The temperature this afternoon, October 10, was 90° F.; but if it had no other advantage it helped to remind us that the worst was over, while the coolness which comes creeping in in the early hours whispers of better things. We are, perhaps, the earliest visitants to the countryside. The camping-grounds are still deep under grass, and the well water is horribly bad. These wells have been lying unused for several months, and are full of frogs and rotting leaves.

The change from Summer to Winter.

In June, when I took my farewell of the countryside, I left it one vast desert of dried-up *jheels* and *ooser* plains, whereon it was

possible to see an object from a mile away; but now, behold the change! The roads are hedged in by wild shrubs and bushes, so high and so dense that it is impossible to see the fields beyond, while overhead the trees are heavily foliaged and hung with festoons of flowering creepers. The whole country is clothed in verdure, and so buried are the villages in the surrounding crops that, if it were not for the presence of smoke and the barking of dogs, the stranger would assuredly pass by ignorant of their very existence. The dry and dirty holes of summer are now transformed into beautiful pools, fringed with tall bulrushes and sprinkled over with the flowers of water lilies. Further afield lie the winter lakes, showing clear and blue amid the surrounding verdure, and offering a tempting resting-place to our aquatic winter visitors. Several large flights

of demoiselle crane have passed over the camp, but the geese have not yet come. The snipe are with us rather earlier than usual this year, but they are still very much scattered. That duck are fast arriving is evident, for the snarer is already at work with his nets.

Snakes. We killed a pair of *karaits* (a very venomous species of snake) this morning on arrival in camp. This is the only bit of excitement we have had since leaving the Station. One of these reptiles was found coiled up under the breakfast-table, and was killed on the spot. Its mate, becoming alarmed, dashed out from under one of the boxes and made for the grass, but we accounted for him also before he was able to reach the shelter before him. The appearance of these snakes has so alarmed the servants that they have decided to sleep in

the carts to-night instead of, as usual, on the ground.

The meaning of Rasad.

There is a simple little word of five letters in the Hindustani language—

R A S A D.

To the villager in general and the *chamar* (the Indian tanner) in particular, this word is like a scorpion with five tails. It makes its appearance in October, and haunts the countryside till the close of March. During these months a special establishment is enlisted to deal with it, and it becomes a source of endless irritation and trouble to all concerned. It forms the subject of endless dockets, reports, memoranda, and complaints, engenders ill-feeling, and very often results in abuse and shoe-beating.

Here is its mystery. When an officer is proceeding on tour he informs the *tehsildar*

(a subordinate native magistrate) in whose jurisdiction he proposes to travel, and is given two *tehsil* peons, whose duty it is to remain with the camp and make all arrangements for *rasad* or supplies. On the arrival of a camp at a village the peons go out foraging. Wood for fuel is taken from the landlord's store; straw is seized wherever it may be found, and the potter is indented on for earthen water-pots. These things are not usually paid for. Why? Because we do not wish to interfere with a "custom sanctioned by immemorial usage," and also because wood has no marketable value in an Indian village; because straw is used merely as bedding and may be removed by the owners as soon as the camp moves on; because earthen pitchers or water-pots are not really the personal property of the potter, but the property of the community; the potter's great-great-great-

grandfather having contracted for himself and his heirs to supply the village with clay vessels in return for food and lodging. But camps vary in size, in proportion to the importance of the individual on tour. The humble camp of an Assistant in the Opium Department is a minnow to the camp of a Commissioner, with his following of fifty or more persons; and to supply so many with wood, straw, and vessels for water, taxes the resources of the village to its utmost.

The Village Outcast.

So far the *chamar* has contributed nothing towards the comfort of the camp, but he is not long forgotten.

"Where do the *chamars* live?"

The peon is directed to some low mud huts on the outskirts of the village, where the stench of hides is overpowering and the filth lies in heaps. Swarms of very black children, naked and mud-stained, are playing with

garbage, while their mothers are seated in the sun, engaged in the kindly office of relieving each other of parasites. As regards the men, some are busy stretching and pegging down hides; others, mostly the aged and infirm, are weaving bamboo baskets, while the rest are in the fields. These are

His origin. the *chamars*, the pariah caste. Some curious legends obtain regarding the origin of the tribe. Once upon a time, so runs the story, a certain raja had two daughters, Chamu and Bamu. These married and each gave birth to a son who was a prodigy of strength. An elephant happened to die in the raja's palace, and being unwilling that it should be cut up, he searched for a man strong enough to remove it whole and bury it. Chamu's son volunteered and performed the task. His cousin Bamu pronounced him an outcast; so the *banyas*, the money-lenders of India,

1. THE CASTOR PLANT IN FRUIT.
2. CHAMARS WITH GRASS FOR SALE.

[*To face p.* 14

are sprung from Bamu and the *chamars* from Chamu. Another legend tells how five Brahmin brothers were out walking together when they came upon the carcass of a crow. Four of them immediately turned aside, but the fifth removed the unclean body. His brethren excommunicated him, and since then it has been the business of his descendants to remove the carcasses of animals.

His duties.

The *chamar* is the village fag; he is every man's servant and must do every one's bidding. Sometimes he receives wages in cash or kind; but, perhaps, more generally an allowance of grain at harvest-time from those in whose fields he has toiled. Dead cattle are made over to him to skin, and he receives a commission on the sales.

What we should do in camp without the *chamars* it is difficult to think. They carry all the supplies from the village to the

camping-ground, split wood, draw water, peel grass, pitch tents, and, in fact, do all the work in the camp. And they dare not refuse or offer resistance, for has not Tulsi Das, the great Goshain sage, said—

"Dhol, gaonwar, sudhr, pus, nari,
Ye hain taran ki adkari"?

which means that it is lawful to beat a drum, a villager, a low-caste man, cattle, and a woman.

His nature.

Though often a man of remarkable proportions and physical strength, the *chamar* is a surprisingly submissive and quiet-tempered creature. By habit he is an inveterate drunkard, and by profession a worker in leather and a cattle poisoner. His caste, colour, character, and calling are all hereditary; and for his miserable and unenviable lot in this world he has to thank his forefathers and the arbitrary caste system of his country.

The dwarf or *valaitie babúl*—a variety of acacia—is now in full bloom. Its yellow powder-puff blossoms are rather smaller and not quite so sweet-scented as the flowers of the common acacia; but it yields its blossoms in surprising profusion. Of all trees at this season of the year the *ním* stands *facile princeps*. It is now in full leaf, and the tired wayfarer is thankful for its shade.

The Babúl.

The Ním.

Mention of trees reminds me that, one morning last week, being out later than usual, I sought shelter for a few moments under a spreading *pipul* or fig-tree. As I stood in the shade I happened to glance up at the foliage and was surprised to find three distinct kinds of leaves growing on the branches. Closer examination proved that this was no botanical freak, but the result of an ingenious device, whereby three trees had been so carefully twisted together in their infancy that they had

A vegetable trinity.

grown up seemingly with the one trunk. The cluster comprised the *pipul*, the *pakri*, and the *bur;* and were symbolic, I was informed, of the Hindu triad—Barma, Bishen, and Mahaish: the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer. There was a shrine under the tree, with the usual mess of oil and half-decayed marigolds; and from the boughs above were hung a couple of earthen vessels containing curds and other offerings to Mata, the goddess of the smallpox. In the fork of the tree was a large nest full of tiny grey squirrels.

Paddy birds and curlews.

Not far from where I am seated at present is a great congregation of paddy birds, of crane with pink coat-tails, and *kúrdatlies* (curlew) both white and black, holding high revel in the fish-haunted slush of a borrow-pit. For the sake of closer inspection I shot one of these cranes a few mornings ago and

found its mouth and throat full of small fish. We extracted five of these, and there were others we could not reach. They were perfectly fresh, and had apparently just been caught. It was then but seven o'clock, so it appears these birds do not experience much difficulty in finding their food.

The crops.

The Hathia or October rains have been a failure this year. On the 16th of the month the sky became overclouded and we had mud banks made round the tents, as we expected a heavy downpour; but there was only a sprinkle of rain after all, and now the heavens are once again clear. The monsoon this year was exceptionally heavy; but as there was a seasonal break, no damage was done to the standing crops. The crop of Indian corn was above the average, and the *juar* and *bajra* (millet) promise to be even better. The sowing of the spring crops still continues.

Sugar-cane and *dal* (pulse) are flourishing. The picking of cotton has begun. The sickle has been laid to the root of the hemp, and the village ponds reek with the smell of the rotting fibre.

## NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER, with its custard-apples and cool breezes, brings us into the border-land, as it were, of a new country. Behind us are left the hot deserts of summer and the miasmatic swamps of the rains; before us lies spread a cool green landscape, a land of bracing air and sparkling sunshine, wherein life is a pleasure. Once again the blood surges through our veins, bringing health and vigour to enervated bodies, and with new life we set out with rifles and tents to revisit the hunting scenes of the previous winter. The joy of Winter.

The cold weather this year, prognostica-

tions to the contrary, is somewhat tardy in its coming; and this is probably due to the failure of the October rains. The sun, after eight o'clock in the morning, is still unpleasantly warm, and by midday all the barbets in the grove are alive and calling.

A cobra.

Snakes, too, are out somewhat later than usual. Attracted by the insects buzzing round the light, a cobra ventured into the verandah of the tent last night and was put to death. In appearance it was not very formidable, but the servants were very much impressed when they saw it, because of its blunt tail; the sign, they said, of an old offender.

Domestic servants.

I do not know what truth there is in this, probably it is a pure myth; but I cannot help thinking that if all old offenders, especially those who are among our domestic servants, bore some distinguishing mark,

AN EKKA. [*To face p.* 22

indicative of past delinquencies, a boon would be conferred upon our better halves. There was a vacancy in our establishment the other day, and we engaged a man with excellent testimonials. These certificates appeared to be genuine; they were written on crested paper and bore European signatures; but the holder was the biggest scoundrel that had ever plied a duster. Police inquiry elicited that he was a well-known bad character, and that he had returned to his home after many years of nefarious wandering in the Punjab and in other provinces. Now how he succeeded in acquiring so many excellent certificates remains a mystery; unless, indeed, he purloined the crested paper from his master's writing-table and hired a *babu* in the bazaar to do the rest.

The Bull of Brahma.

From the annoyance of domestic servants it is an easy transition to the annoyance

experienced in camp from Brahmini bulls. These so-called sacred beasts are, to all intents and purposes, wild; and they are extremely savage. One of them got into our camp a few evenings ago and gave us a very bad quarter of an hour. Apparently disappointed that the cart-bullocks were not cows, he expressed his displeasure by goring them fiercely in the flanks. The bellows of the unfortunate victims roused the camp, and the servants, arming themselves with staves, and flourishing lanterns, rushed to the rescue. The bull, losing courage, turned and bolted; but, dazed by the lights and distracted by the wild yells of his pursuers, he lost his bearings and came smashing into the camp. The tent nearest him was a *shamiana* (a reception tent), and into this he rushed, scattering the tables and chairs in all directions, and carrying off a

portion of the *chick* (a reed screen hung before doorways in India) on his horns. Very fortunately we had just dined, and the crockery and lamps had been removed. On emerging from the ruins of the *shamiana* he made straight for our sleeping-tent, where we happened to be at the time; but the terriers pluckily tackled him, and he went off at a tangent in the direction of the office. The *babus* disappeared behind the trees like lightning, and it was very fortunate for them that the bull did not find them at home, for, getting mixed up with the ropes, he rushed the tent and tore his way through it. All this time a part of the *shamiana chick* was dangling from his horns, and we found it the next morning reposing in a field some two hundred yards from the grove.

Rain in Winter.

In the hot summer months rain is always welcome, more especially if one happens to

be under canvas with the mercury at 110°; but during the winter in camp, I can imagine nothing more disagreeable and depressing. We do not mind exchanging a large house for a few small tents, provided the weather remains clear, for we spend a great deal of our time in the shade of the trees; but on rainy days we long for more dry space and the open verandahs of the bungalow. The winter rain has come very much earlier than usual this year. At midnight on the 12th, we were awakened by the deep boom of distant thunder, and a couple of hours later the rain was pattering on the canvas roof. Towards morning it changed to a drizzle, which continued throughout the day, ending up in the evening with a downpour. Yesterday there was no rain, but the sky remained overcast till nightfall, when the last of the clouds disappeared across the river

into Oudh. This morning we marched through a dense fog and arrived in camp considerably moist.

Harvest prospects.

This is the first rain we have had since the middle of September, when the monsoon ceased, and it should prove very helpful to the young spring crop, which has just begun to show above the surface. It was not heavy enough to cause any damage to the ripening grain, though the *juar* and *moong dal*, lying on the threshing-floors, have probably sustained some harm. Ram Bux is proverbially slow in all that he undertakes, and rain at harvest-time invariably finds him dawdling and unprepared.

There is plenty of moisture in the soil this year, and every hope of a good spring harvest. Wheat is germinating well. Tobacco, poppy, and potatoes are being sown. The harvesting of pig-nuts is over. The *juar* is coming

down fast, disclosing to view a splendid crop of *arhar dal.* Among the trees we have the cork and acacia in flower. The former is very beautiful with its dark-green foliage and clusters of pretty white jasmine-like blossoms. The people are busy with the *lac* harvest. The *lac* forms in lumps on the *pipul* tree, and is scraped off with iron implements. It is then heated and spread out in thin sheets, which are the shellac of commerce.

The Fast of Ramzan.

Our Mahomedan servants are at present engaged in the observance of the *Id-ul-Fitr* fast. In the winter months, to fast from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof is no very severe trial; but in warm weather it requires a deal of religious zeal and enthusiasm to abstain from drink all through the long hot hours. Then the man who is ashamed to withdraw openly from the lists

has recourse to one of many secret tricks and devices. Fruit, as we all know, is a good thirst-assuager, and when the *ramzan* falls in the warm spring months the "fast-keeping" servants evince a predilection for spending the day in the shady plum groves. If you even hint that the fruit is a factor in their choice you will raise quite a storm of religious indignation. A lady who had observed this tendency on the part of her servants warned them during the month of the fast to keep clear of her garden. They feigned to be deeply offended, but the result was a general collapse.

Plague.

As I rode through a bazaar this morning, at sunrise, I observed many dead rats lying in the roadway, thrown out there by the shopkeepers, who were engaged in sweeping out their premises at the time. On

questioning a man whether there was plague in the village, I was told that there was none at present, but that

THE ORDER HAD COME.

Another man, in reply to my question, said, "At present there is no plague in this neighbourhood, but we hear the first case has been ordered for the 25th."

Superstition and sedition.

Plague has exacted a heavy toll in these provinces these past five years. Wherever I go I find that the people still give credence to the slanderous rumour that plague is no disease, but a diabolical contrivance on the part of the British Government to reduce the population. The Oriental is a fatalist in the last degree, and is in addition steeped in apathy and indolence. Famine and pestilence find him unprepared because he will not be warned in time. Precautionary

measures he views with alarm. A report that plague is advancing reaches his ears, and horrible rumours float in the air. Then one day he wakes to find that orders have arrived to build segregation huts, and that the local dispensary is filled, as by magic, with queer-looking disinfectants. A dark story floats through the bazaar, of a list of villages in the district magistrate's office, and a whisper is heard that his village is next on that list. A week later, and the first case occurs. Does it take him by surprise? Not at all.

Has he not learnt to expect rain when he sees the clouds gather and hears the thunder roll? And what are the grass huts and the disinfectants but the precursors of the plague storm?

Is it possible, he asks himself, for the Government to know that his village will be

the next attacked? If they know, then clearly plague is of their own making; and if it is not, how comes it that his father and his grandfather were never troubled by it?

Does he not live in the same manner as they did? And why is it that only natives die? Also is it not strange that the outbreak every year is synchronal with the touring season, when the *sahibs* are out camping in the country?

Cholera.

Talking of the suspiciousness of natives reminds me of a very severe cholera epidemic a few years ago in Behar. Within a fortnight of the first seizure the streams and pools of the country were filled with the bodies of the victims.

The fire of suspicion which smoulders in every Indian breast was immediately kindled into flame, and sinister rumours went the round of the country. Believing that the

water they were drinking had been poisoned, the villagers mounted guard over the wells and objected to all officials—European and native—coming within fifty paces of their dwellings. As a further result of their suspicions they cleaned out their wells, and in a very short time thereafter the disease abated. The cholera disappeared, but the suspicions of the people remained and were confirmed; and when, a year or two later, plague made its appearance, they burst forth afresh. Many ridiculous stories were put into circulation by mischief-makers, and it was seriously stated that plague was spread by rats which had been inoculated by the doctors; reports were, moreover, current that dead rats had been found in the villages with needles through them.

The seedbeds of sedition.

The minds of the masses are diseased with suspicion, the legacy bequeathed them by

centuries of misgovernment; and the most childish stories are readily believed if they tend to discredit the ruling race. The rumours and gossipry of the countryside are sometimes so ridiculous and so absurd that it is not easy to fathom the motives of the inventors; but there are others so virulent and so pointed, that it is not difficult to trace the source whence they spring. The administrative headquarters of Indian districts are the gathering-places of all the idlers in the country. Half educated, disloyal, and discontented, they haunt the bazaars and courts, ever disseminating scurrilous tales. For a small consideration they are prepared to forge a signature or indite an anonymous and lying petition. The gutter press of the country keeps them well supplied with the raw material, which they, and they alone, know how to dish up to suit the

palates of their local clients. I have travelled through many provinces, and could relate many strange tales and rumours that have, from time to time, reached me; but for downright malice, hatred, and all uncharitableness commend me to the fair province of Bengal.

Cotton. A few mornings ago I met Ram Bux and his family, heavily laden with bundles of cotton, hurrying away to market. The sun had risen but an hour since, and the display of so much energy aroused my suspicions. Had they purloined the cotton, or was the *mahajan* (money-lender) shortly expected? Neither, as it happened, was the case. Simpleton Ram Bux had picked the cotton while yet the dew clung to it, and was now making for the market at his best speed, for even Ram Bux knows that damp cotton weighs heavier than dry.

Coin-collecting. Grown weary of the camera—which had

proved a steady drain on our slender resources and had brought us no profit, save, perhaps, a widening in the circle of our friends—we decided to deflect the stream of our spare energies into a more profitable channel. We passed the many and varied hobbies that afflict mankind in review before us, and chose "coin-collecting" as the one requiring the least apparatus, yet likely to prove a good investment; but, with an eye to expense, we decided to restrict the collection to copper and silver. Having equipped ourselves with a fair working knowledge of the subject, gleaned from the works of a well-known Indian numismatist, and a bag of copper with which we hoped to excite the cupidity of the oleaginous *banya*, we drove off in high spirits to the neighbouring village. It is a village now, but it was once a town and the capital of a famous Hindu raja of

THE MEM SAHIB.

[*To face p.* 37

great wealth and power. It has gone on shrinking with the centuries, until now nothing remains but a vast mound, strewn with broken bricks and potsherds, upon which the modern village stands; but there is a wealth of coins buried below the surface of that mound, which no one has exploited.

A verbal misunderstanding.

As we were driving up the slope we met a native coming in our direction. He was cleanly attired and appeared to be intelligent, so we accosted him. The idea of a *sahib* and his wife hunting for old coins seemed rather to tickle his fancy; but he was gracious enough to part with the information that the money-changer, or *sharraf* (that was the name we caught), was the best man to go to. When we arrived in the bazaar we found it was market-day, and the streets were so thronged with people that we were compelled to proceed at a walking pace.

Had the people never set eyes on white faces before they could not have stared at us with greater surprise ; but when we asked for the *sharraf*, and my wife jingled the bag of pice, the surprised look left their faces, and they appeared to know all about it, and pointed out a blue-coloured house further up the road. As we were threading our way through the throng, I heard one man ask another what the *sahib* and *maim* wanted. The reply was lost in the babble of the crowd, but I caught the exclamation, "Ram Ram!" uttered in what appeared to me a shocked voice. Then some one else, by way of explanation, added, "These Europeans drink a great deal!" The remark amused us, but we were unable to connect it with anything that had gone before. Presently we pulled up at the blue house, and a man came out and salaamed most humbly. Then we saw

our mistake. Over the doorway was painted an immense bottle in red, upon the blue wall, and the atmosphere told of the pot-house. Now when we go coin-hunting we are careful to use the correct word, and say *sarraf;* but to prevent mistakes we always add, "not *sharrab*" (liquor).

The Money-changer.

The *sarraf*, when we found him, was a distinct disappointment. We expected a humble individual whose whole stock-in-trade would not be worth more than a few rupees, and one who would be delighted to part with stray old coins for face value; but, instead, we found a fat money-grubber, attired in a flowered muslin shirt, seated cross-legged on a white carpet in the verandah of his shop, casting up accounts. Round his neck was a massive gold chain, and his fingers were ornamented with heavy gold rings set with turquoise. Through the shop door, which

happened to be ajar, we caught a glimpse of bales of cloth piled roof high. Our friend was the *mahajan*, the banker, of the village, also a cloth merchant and *sarraf*. He had no old copper coins, as they were beneath his notice; but there were some silver rupees of the Oudh kings—purchased for a mere song from the boys of the village, who had found them during the rains on the old mound—for which he had the hardihood to demand ten times the intrinsic value. Now when we decided to make the collection of old coins a hobby, we also decided to shun the professional dealer. Therefore the old money-grubbing *sarraf* proved a failure.

Agra pice. We next turned our attention to the *banyas* and workers in brass, and paced patiently from shop to shop asking for old pice, fat pice; but wherever we asked the reply invariably came in the negative. Now that the people

found that *sharrab* was not our quest, they became even more suspicious than before; and I am sure they suspected we had our pockets charged with plague germs, for they evinced great eagerness to pass us along. The idea of a *sahib* and his wife hunting for old valueless copper coins! It could be nothing but the plague. At last, after much walking through narrow and noisome streets, we arrived at a jeweller's shop, and here we found the good man actually using some old dummy pice as weights.

"Just what we want," I said. "I'll pay you one pice each for those I select."

"Oh!" exclaimed the jeweller, "I have plenty of these; but you should have asked for Agra pice; we call these Agra pice."

Why they called them Agra pice no one could explain; perhaps it was because they are no such thing.

Relics of Alexander the Great.

We got five from the jeweller — two Græco-Bactrian—and when we paid him five pice he was delighted, and every one invited us to inspect his stock. We jingled our bag of current copper, and great stores of old coins poured out of the shops; and we did so well that we were able to begin our collection with twenty-one rare old coins, including five very respectable specimens of Græco-Bactrian, and we paid but fivepence half-penny for the lot.

These old coins are sold by weight to coppersmiths at a ridiculously low rate, so when a *sahib* comes round and offers a pice each, which is about four times as much as the coppersmith pays, the people think he must be either drunk or mad, or as rich as Crœsus.

## DECEMBER

WHIR-R-R! It is intensely cold. We have been marching westward lately in the teeth of a cutting wind which penetrates the thickest material one can wear. If you have any desire to feel the real bite of winter you should be abroad at sunrise, ere the mist has altogether yielded to the sun. The village folk, especially the aged and infirm, present a miserable picture in their thin cotton clothing, which affords them no protection from the cold; and yet, should you happen to visit the river at sunrise, you will find long strings of Hindus—men, women, and even children—trooping down, with their teeth a-chatter, for

A trial of faith.

the morning dip. They may be dwellers in outer darkness, ignorant idolaters; but how true to the teachings of their faith, how loyal to the religion of their fathers! It must require no small amount of religious zeal and conviction to go cheerfully through this trying ordeal, morning after morning, in the bitterest weather. When I see these people, so thin and so ill-clad, shivering on the bank of the river, I marvel at their fortitude and their devotion; and I wonder how many of us, we who so love our ease and comfort, would carry out the same duty in the same cheerful spirit as these "heathen" people do, were it ordained by our Church.

Degrees of cleanliness.

The Hindu is scrupulously clean in his person, but the same cannot be said of the lower classes of Mahomedan. The difference is very striking in our camp. When we are pitched near a stream or river, the Hindus

never fail in the morning bath; and when there is no stream or river in the vicinity, they make the most of the wells: but the Mahomedan shrinks from water. It would be no exaggeration to say that for every one hundred baths the Hindu has, the Mahomedan has one, and even that one he takes with reluctance. The other day—I think it was the 9th—there was the Id festival, and we granted the Mahomedan members of the establishment leave for the day. They scrubbed themselves at the well, donned clean white apparel, and repaired to the mosque for prayers. When they returned they looked a couple of shades fairer than when they left.

Love and marriage in India.

A native of India marries because he cannot prevent it; he is allowed no voice in the matter. His marriage is arranged by

his parents, and he must comply; consequently there is no such thing as love, in our sense of the word, among the people of this land. If such love existed here at *all* we should expect to find it in the quiet homes of the village; but, even here, it is absent. There was a quaint illustration of this the other day. Ram Bux sent his wife out early one morning to pick cotton in a distant field. On the way back she had to follow a narrow footpath along the bank of a stream, and at one point in the journey the bank slipped from under her feet and she and her load were instantly precipitated into the current below. Now it so happened that a man was working in the field in the vicinity, and, seeing the accident, hastened to the rescue. It was a question of saving one of the two—either the woman or the cotton,—so the man humanely chose

to save the woman. The cotton floated away. Shortly after, I met this man as I went shooting through the fields, and he narrated the occurrence, and asked me whether he was entitled to a reward from the Government. I informed him that Government was under no obligation, and that the best person to address on the subject would be the husband, if there were one; but he shook his head in a disappointed manner, and informed me that the husband of the woman had absolutely refused to give him anything because he had not saved the cotton. The old woman was valueless, he said, but the cotton——

The purdah.

If there were any love between the native and his wife he would not wall her in as we immure bad characters in a jail. He is suspicious of his wife, he cannot trust her; where confidence is wanting there cannot be

love. The *purdah* is an insult to the women, yet some of these poor creatures are strangely proud of it. The *purdah* seems to raise the social status of the family. Among the common classes the *purdah* is not observed, as the women work at manual labour; but as soon as a man finds himself possessed of sufficient means to enable him to dispense with his wife's assistance out of doors, he puts her into *purdah*.

A touching instance.

Not long ago I happened to be passing through a village when a house took fire. It was then but eight in the morning, and as the people had not yet gone out to their work in the fields, there were plenty of able and willing hands to help to save the property; but the woman of the house was a *purdah-nashín* and absolutely refused to leave the house, although the smoking rafters were falling about her. There was a great

crowd of people at the door when I arrived on the scene, and the noise was deafening. As soon as the people saw me coming the word *sahib* went round, and they quieted down. I could not understand why they were wasting valuable time in talk when they might have been more usefully employed. Then it was explained to me that the good man of the house was absent, and the wife refused to quit the house because she was a *purdah* woman. With great difficulty we influenced her to leave the premises, but not before several of us had sustained injuries from falling rafters. The net result of our efforts was the rescue of the woman, but not a farthing's worth of property was saved.

A Raja's hospitality.

We are passing through the estate of a raja. The house in which we are installed to-day is maintained for the use of travellers

by our royal host. It seems ungrateful, therefore, to be captious and critical; but the premises are woefully damp, and the effluvia rising from the floors are most objectionable. In between the visits of travellers the native watchman and his family have the run of the mansion, so perhaps it is not the damp that is alone to blame.

Smells and smells.

It reminds me quaintly enough of a German landlord who was very anxious to let one of his houses which had for some time remained untenanted. It was situated in rather a low-lying locality, in a very moist and malarial district. Some new-comers had been warned against taking the house, but they thought there could be no harm in looking over it, so the portly old German himself accompanied them on a visit to the premises.

"Oh!" exclaimed Madam, applying a

scented kerchief to her nose as she stepped into one of the inner rooms.

"Iz no zing, iz no zing," instantly responded the landlord. "Iz me, iz me,"—proudly patting himself on the chest—"but, ah! madam, you zhould zmell me in ze zummaire."

Primitive irrigation.

The sowing over, Ram Bux is busy now with the watering of his fields. There was a sprinkling of rain last night, which will prove helpful; but there still remains plenty of water in the *jheels*, and the people are drawing it off as fast as their baskets will work. A couple of days ago our camp was pitched on the banks of a *jheel*, and the splish-splash of the slung-baskets was the last sound we heard at night and the first which greeted our ears on the following morning. But from this you must not conclude that our friend Ram Bux often indulges

in such severe exercise. This was but a sudden outburst, a paroxysm of energy on his part, for the supply was running out, and all those whose lands abutted on the *jheel* had equal rights in the use of water. The slung-basket lift is the simplest, yet the most effective lift in rural parts, and it is eminently suited to Ram Bux and his requirements. It has been calculated that a couple of men using a slung-basket can lift five hundred cubic feet of water per hour through a height of four feet. These baskets are generally used singly, as Ram Bux is as leisurely about irrigation as over other matters, but sometimes you will find two or even three baskets being used together. Each basket is slung at the end of two long ropes, and is worked by two men. The basket is dashed into the water, then lifted up, and with a swing is discharged on to a

higher level. I have seen water being raised by means of these baskets to a height of fully nine feet; but, as a rule, four feet is not exceeded.

Martins.

Travelling along the banks of a canal some few days ago I came to a bridge where the martins were nesting. Their habitation was quite a work of art. It was a huge mud structure about five feet square, clinging to one of the piers just above the water. It was built much after the fashion of a honeycomb with countless chambers, and the little birds were busy putting in the final touches when I passed.

A dangerous home.

Further in my wanderings along the green bank I arrived at a weir, pierced with five round holes about nine inches each in diameter. Through four of these holes the water was spouting and hissing; but the fifth, the centre one, appeared to be clogged with

dirt, for it was quite dry. Presently a pigeon, a blue-rock, swooped down, then disappeared into the hole. A few seconds later it flew out again, and amid the roar of the falls I imagined I could hear the cry of the nestlings. Surely no bird ever chose a more dangerous locality wherein to bring up her brood.

Exotic speech.

When the conversation flags in the club reading-room, at the dinner-party, or over the tea-cups, the *babu* is often introduced to provide mirth for the company assembled, and seldom fails to bring down the "house." I do not mean the *babu* in the flesh; oh, dear no, but anecdotes of *babu* English. I can quite picture an assembly of *babus* seated with their fat legs folded under them having similar jokes at our expense; for young Englishmen fresh to the country often excite our risible faculties quite as much as the native. A friend has been stopping with us

in camp for a few days, and the language he speaks in lieu of Hindustani is often comic in the extreme. He startled us one morning by gravely announcing, with a smile on his face, that he had just eaten two *chaprasis* (peons), and that they were "jolly nice." Now this is a feat that would turn even the king of the Hurdwar crocodiles green with envy, yet the young man assured us that he could have "managed" another with comfort, but as this was the first occasion he had ventured on such diet, he thought it advisable to limit himself to two. For the sake of the uninitiated, I am obliged to explain that he meant *chappaties* or cakes of Indian bread, and nothing so horribly indigestible as *chaprasis*.

The progress of the crops.

The picking of cotton still continues, but most of it is now in the market. The stalks have been cut down, twisted together and

used as a lining for the wells. Potatoes are already in the market, and the pressing of sugar-cane has begun. A great deal of wheat has been sown this year, but very little gram. The poppy is germinating nicely and promises well. Tobacco plants are flourishing. The conditions at present prevailing are favourable to a good harvest next spring; but we are not yet halfway through the wood, and no one knows what January has in store. Three nights of good hard frost and a shower or two of hail, and Ram Bux's hopes go down to zero.

Ram Bux's cattle.

I had occasion this morning to spend half-an-hour in a village. As usual the people gathered round and we got talking on the subject of cattle. Ram Bux's cattle are the sorriest specimens of their kind that you can imagine. His cow yields about two quarts of poor, thin milk a day; his buffalo about

three quarts, and his goat nothing. About ten o'clock in the morning, when the sun has dissipated the mist, all the cattle of the village are assembled in some convenient and open spot and are then driven out to graze; but there are no lands specially set aside for grazing, and as Ram Bux is in the habit of cultivating every square yard of ground that will give even the faintest promise of a return, and runs the plough even to the very base of his walls, it will be seen that the poor dumb cattle have nothing remaining but the groves where, no grass will grow, and the *oosers* or alkaline plains, which are as barren as the palms of one's hands. As for fodder, Ram Bux is not able to supply more than will fill just the cavities of their teeth. Ram Bux undoubt- His poverty.
edly throws away a great deal of money in litigation and in marriage festivities;

but there is no disputing that he is poor, miserably poor. His children show it in their thin, pitifully scraggy condition, and in their pinched, hungry faces; his wife shows it; he shows it; his cattle show it. I asked Ram Bux why he does not give his cattle salt.

"Oh," he replied, "*if* we gave them salt they would develop such prodigious appetites that we should not know how to feed them. Better that they should remain as they are."

Was ever poverty more pitifully expressed?

His means of locomotion.

For the transport of his body Ram Bux depends very much on his legs. They are not much to look at, for excess of walking has ground them down to mere sinews; but they know not fatigue. I have known a native to set out on foot on a journey of eighty miles without the least concern, and to accomplish it within forty-four hours.

A BAILEE. [*To face p.* 59

Sometimes you will meet Ram Bux astride of a *tat*, but he rides like a bundle of potatoes and is never at ease on horseback. *Ekkas*, the primitive pony-carts of India, are not to be had in the villages, where the roads are unmetalled and too heavy for the dragging capacity of the *ekka* pony. There remains the bullock-cart. The *zamindar* or landlord indulges in a four-wheeled "bailee," with a domed roof hung with curtains, and drawn by a pair of fast-trotting bulls; but the common people are unable to afford the expense of these luxurious conveyances, and the common bullock-cart crawls at a pace that would make an active snail blush; so Ram Bux is compelled to make the most of the legs that Nature has provided him with.

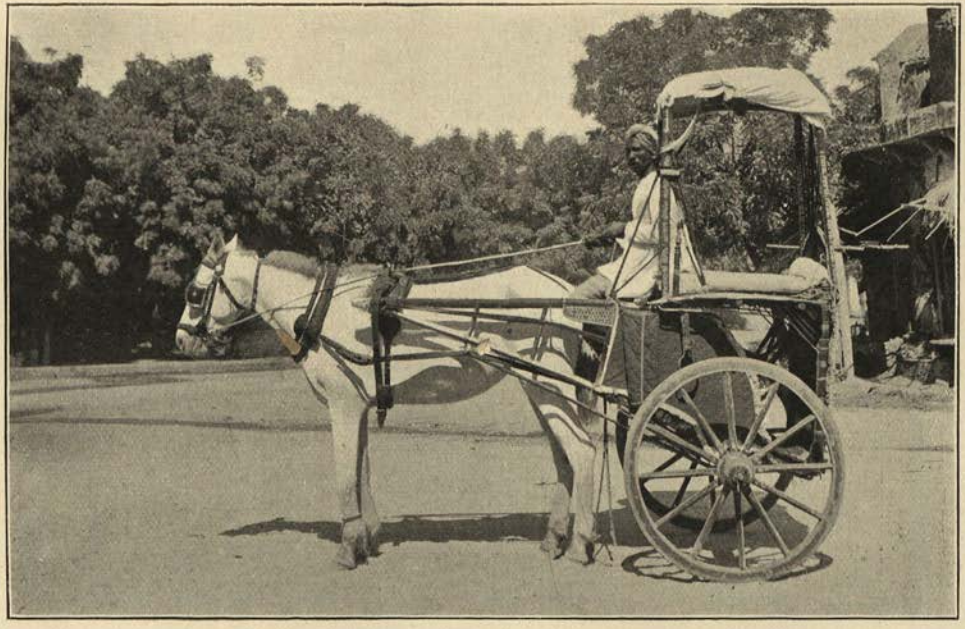
The camel-carriage.

Occasionally, when he is the recipient of a summons from the courts, or is unable any longer to resist the overpowering fascinations

of some neighbouring town, he makes a bee-line to the nearest point on the metalled road and there awaits the arrival of the camel-carriage. It is impossible to conceive of anything more uncomfortable, or more uncompromising in its hideousness, than one of these conveyances. It is built in two storeys, with accommodation for about twenty persons. There are, as a rule, no springs, and to it is yoked the most odoriferous animal in all creation. It sets out on its long journey at sunset, and grinds along through the dark watches of the night, scaring away all living creatures within a radius of half-a-mile of the road.

A queer misadventure.

A couple of evenings back I was returning to my camp in the dark. The mare I was riding was restive and nervous. She did not approve of the dark shadows of the trees lying athwart the road, and the

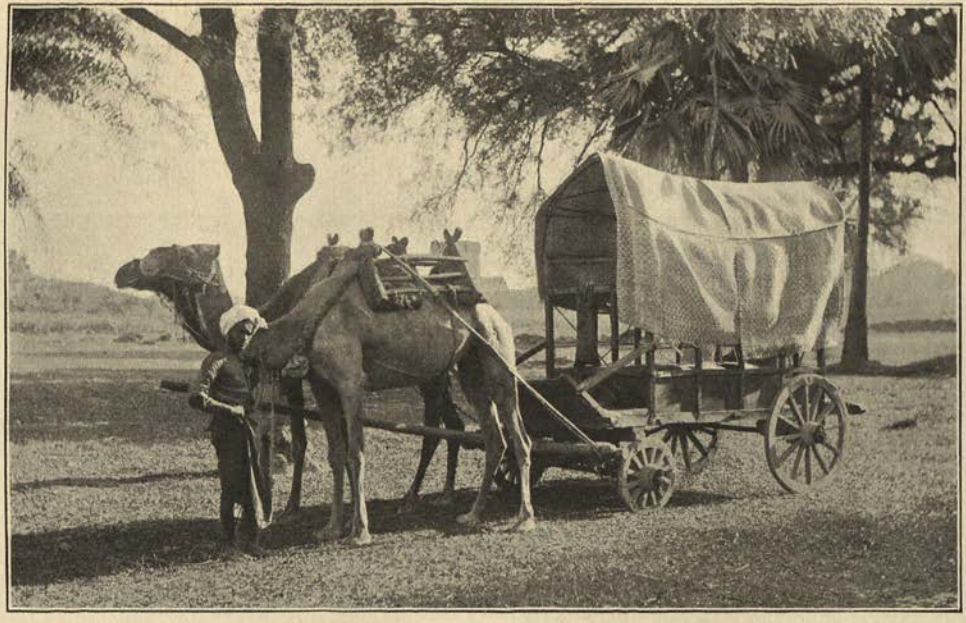


AN EKKA.

[*To face p.* 60

slouching jackals made her start. Presently, as we came along, we heard a succession of most unearthly noises ahead of us. At first these sounded like the heartrending cries of some human being in deep anguish; then they suddenly changed into the hideous laugh of the hyæna, followed by a sound resembling the rasping of steel mingled with the clang of a forge and the noise of rushing water. Then again they changed, and now their character became so appalling that they sounded as if all the demons and evil spirits of Hindu mythology—all the Rakshas and Dewas—had come together and were wrangling over the remains of some benighted traveller. This was more than equine flesh could stand. The mare blew a terrified blast from her nose, turned, and jumped off at a tangent into the darkness. The next moment we were floundering in a borrow-pit, and a

moment later found ourselves bogged in a marsh. The marsh proved a blessing in disguise, for the mare had reached a state of frenzy, and had become uncontrollable. At least it brought her to a standstill. Although it was cold winter weather she was bathed in sweat; her nostrils were working like a pair of bellows, and her eyes must have been starting out of their sockets. I patted and cajoled her to little purpose. Presently, while still in this plight, we saw, dimly in the darkness, a huge, unwieldy form moving up the road, and we heard the babble of many voices. Then we knew what it was. Only a camel-carriage, with a full load of passengers, journeying to the city! For the sake of economy the lights had been extinguished, and the wheels were shrieking lamentably for grease



A CAMEL CARRIAGE. [*To face p.* 62

We have had two days of very heavy rain. As soon as it ceased I walked out into the fields, and found the natives actively engaged in cutting channels to draw off the surplus water. A portion of the field was completely submerged, and the proprietor was standing on the bank, a picture of hopeless misery. To save the crop was beyond human power, as the land was low-lying and the water was more than two feet deep. At harvest-time it is the custom to set aside a small portion of the produce for the Brahmins of the temple; so, to cheer my friend, I hinted that the loss might be debited to the share of the Brahmins. I thought I noticed a gleam of relief in his eye at the suggestion; but I fear the loss will be felt most by the hungry little mouths at home.

The damage of rain.

The *jheels*, tanks, borrow-pits, and all the

hollows of the country are once again full; and even if we have no more rain, a sufficiency of moisture is assured, and the people are looking forward to a bountiful harvest.

Biltong for Burma.

Passing through a village one morning I noticed strips of meat hung up on lines in the sun to dry. On inquiry I was told that the meat was beef, and was being prepared for the Burma market. Thirsting for knowledge, I went in search of the factory. As we approached it the smell became overpowering; but putting aside the inclination to fly, I boldly entered to inquire into the *modus operandi*. The butcher who conducts the business works on economical lines, and though he would not admit it, I am inclined to think that all the cattle that are worked up into "biltong" die from natural causes. The process of manufacture is simple. The meat is torn off in long strips; rubbed over

with impure salt, and hung up in the sun to dry. Unsalted "biltong" is also made, but not for export. The natives tell me that this pickled beef, when ground and curried, makes most excellent eating.

## JANUARY

### 'VOLUPTATES AGRICOLARUM'

Frost. SINCE I last wrote King Frost has been busy, and his icy breath has passed over the land, leaving blight and destruction behind. As I rode through the fields this morning at sunrise I saw the frost sparkling on the green grass like powdered silver. Like the cobra, it is beautiful, but deadly in its bite. The *dal* fields have suffered most, and in some parts of the country nearly the whole of this crop has been wiped out. Tobacco and potatoes have also been injured; but the poppy plants have miraculously escaped, and look

AN INDIAN HACKNEY CARRIAGE.

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healthy and vigorous. The crops on irrigated lands have suffered less damage than those not so happily situated; but this reminds me that I was told by a native that drought was unknown in India previous to the introduction of British canals.

Ram Bux's enemies.

A good monsoon means plenty of birds, and we have more birds this year than in any during the past decade. Demoiselle crane, "chanting their dolorous notes," have come down to the plains this winter in thousands, and are doing great damage in the wheat fields bordering the rivers. They are the most destructive of all the migratory birds that prey upon Ram Bux's fields, for they rob the seed from freshly sown lands. Of geese we have plenty this winter, and they, too, are a source of worry and anxiety to the cultivator, for they evince a partiality for green food, young wheat-shoots for

preference. The wretched cultivator's time passes in battling with innumerable foes. From the time he deposits the seed in the ground to the time of harvest it is one long struggle; and when he has overcome the drought, and survived the frost, and hunted off the pig, and killed the crane, and scared the goose, and reaped the crop, then comes the arch-enemy—that blood-sucking ghoul, the *mahajan* (money-lender). There is no frightening him, no killing him, no escaping him. He has come for his pound of flesh, and must have it.

Poor, wretched cultivator! If there is any truth, any good-feeling, any morality in India, it is among you who so laboriously till the soil, and yet what a hard lot is yours —a life of poverty, of struggle, of dirt, of disease.

Among our other feathered visitors the

OUR CAMP CARTS. [*To face p.* 2

toothsome snipe are in great abundance this year. The marshes are teeming with them, and big bags are the order of the day. Duck are, of course, plentiful, as there is so much water lying about. I cannot remember ever having seen the starlings in such numbers. There are just myriads of them, and flocks of not less than five thousand are common. The other day we were encamped between their feeding-grounds, some grass lands; and their roosting-place, a jungle of *babúl;* and in the evening, when the sun was setting, they passed over the tents in great flights, looking for all the world like magnified locusts, but travelling at express speed.

Snipe, duck and starlings.

"In large troops
And multitudinous, when winter reigns,
The starlings on their wings are borne abroad."

The village at which we are encamped

The ravages of Plague.

to-day has been swept by plague, and the only inhabitants at present are an old woman whom nothing will induce to leave her home, a black cat who has voluntarily thrown in his lot with the old woman, and a caged parrot on whom the hush of the village has fallen. Half the population have succumbed to the pestilence, and the remaining moiety have taken up their residence under the trees in the neighbourhood. The visitation is so severe this year that it might with truth be said—

> "One ploughs, another sows,
> Who will reap, no one knows."

The amphibious buffalo.

The hairless body and oily black skin of the Indian buffalo proclaim him an animal of aquatic habits. In warm weather he spends the day wallowing in the village pond or lying quiescent in the cool waters of the river. A curious lapse of memory

on the part of the camp *jemadar* one day forcibly brought back to mind the habits and peculiarities of these amphibious creatures. The camp-carts got down to their axles in a slough on the banks of a stream, and there they remained. Then the *jemadar*, always a man of resource, pounced upon some buffaloes which were grazing in the vicinity, and transferred the baggage to their backs. All went merrily till midstream was reached, when, with one accord, the animals folded up their legs and disappeared from view. The incident might have been mirth-provoking had the official records been concerned, and not the commissariat.

Operation of the Arms Act

I was out after black buck one day when a native landlord begged of me to shoot a particularly aggressive boar that had taken up his quarters in a patch of sugar-cane near the village. I could not oblige him without

incurring the displeasure of the Tent Club, but I told him I would make a note of it and inform the magistrate *sahib*, the secretary of the Boar-hunters' Association. He evinced no signs of satisfaction.

"What are we to do, sahib?" he asked. "The Government will not permit us to keep guns, and the deer, in consequence, increase every year. As for the pigs, the magistrate *sahib* has ordered that they must on no account be killed, as the *sahiblog* come here in summer to stick them. We used to sow," he continued, "a great deal of rice along the banks of this stream, but since the pigs have increased we have been compelled to give up the cultivation of rice, for the pigs destroy it. We sprinkle our wheat fields with liquid manure and so save about half the crop; but the rest goes into the bellies of the deer."

While we were talking I noticed several men amidst the wheat engaged in the operation to which the land-holder referred. A bunch of dry grass is soaked in liquid manure and is then swished about the field. Wheat so treated is shunned by animals; but just think of the labour!

Death of a pigeon.

A few days ago, when out for an evening walk, we happened to take the gangmen's path along the railway line. Overhead were the telegraph wires. Presently a flight of wild pigeons came by at great speed, with a hawk close upon them. In crossing the lines one of the birds came into violent collision with the wire and fell dead at our feet. My wife picked it up and found a deep gash across its breast, from which a stream of blood was flowing.

The anger of bees.

The smoke of our camp-fires one day roused the ire of the bees that had built in

the trees overhead, and they immediately descended upon us in millions. Instantly the camp was in an uproar. Hearing the noise without, I left the tent to see to what the disturbance was due. The grove was alive with tiny honey-bees; the horses were plunging frantically, and the servants were flying in all directions. Before I had quite realized what had occurred the bees were upon me. The next five seconds—the time occupied in getting back to shelter—were the most exciting five seconds of my life. I was stung in two places on my face, and had several stings on my hands. The horses had by now snapped their ropes and were careering across-country like creatures possessed. In the distance, looking through the network of the windows, we could see the old cook, turbanless and shoeless, flying at utmost speed. His arms beat the air like

the sails of a wind-mill, and we could imagine the swarm round him. Presently he gained the bazaar, and, shrieking "Murder," threw himself upon the ground, treating the astonished onlookers to an acrobatic performance of no mean order. Some of the servants who had blankets handy took refuge under them, and there they were still and dared not show their faces. The camp-fires still smoked, and the servants' food was lying, untasted, near them. We were imprisoned in the tent; the horses, for aught we knew, were still running; and most of the servants had disappeared. An hour passed, and yet another; but still the fires smouldered and still the bees kept on the wing, angry and desperate. Unable to submit to confinement any longer, we wrapped our heads in blankets, and taking Sonny Baba in my arms we broke through, calling to those who were

still in the camp to follow. We were hotly pursued, and it was not until we had left the grove some five hundred yards behind that our assailants withdrew. Gradually the servants returned, and later the horses were brought in; but we were not able to visit the camp till sunset, when our winged enemies went back to hive. Under cover of darkness the tents were struck; and so ended one of the most eventful days that has fallen to our lot in this country.

Some of the servants and all the horses were very severely stung. From one horse alone we extracted no less than fifty long black stings. Bindoo, the head groom, was stung all over his face and hands, for he very pluckily ran to the assistance of the horses. I picked out several stings from the back of his neck and ears. The following day great swellings appeared, and the horses

AN INDIAN PALANQUIN. [*To face p.* 76

looked as though they were suffering from dropsy; but after the first hour or two there appeared to be no pain.

Good bags.

We have secured some good bags recently. Five of us were out the other day, and we brought in nearly two hundred birds. A young man of sporting proclivities, and but lately out from home, has spent a few days with us in the country, greatly to our entertainment. One morning while we were beating for partridge he suddenly seized my arm and, pointing to a pair of sarus crane in a distant field, called out, "Flamingo, flamingo," in a most excited voice.

Adventure with a crane.

"By Jove!" I exclaimed, entering into the spirit of the fun, "what luck. Flamingoes in these parts are about as rare as the flowering bamboo. Now be very careful, for these birds are very shy. You should advance under cover of that tree there, and when you have

reached it you will find that the birds are within range. We'll stay here in the grass."

He advanced with the nimbleness of a Boer, and in a very short time had reached the tree, under which he halted a moment to regain his breath. Soon we heard the sharp crack of the gun, and one of the birds rolled over in the dust. The next instant it was up, and, dragging its broken wing along, ran for its life; meanwhile its mate flew away uttering the most discordant shrieks. The young *shikari*, determined not to be robbed of his prize, and forgetting for the moment that his gun had another loaded barrel available, dropped his weapon and went in hot pursuit. The sarus was heading straight for a swamp; but the race was unequal, and every moment the distance between pursued and pursuer rapidly diminished. Now we all know that under certain

circumstances even a worm will turn, but few people have any conception of the fierceness of a wounded sarus brought to bay. So soon as the bird saw that there was nothing to be gained by continuing the race he turned, and, with open mouth venting the most appalling screams, flew as straight as an arrow for his assailant. The onslaught was unexpected, panic ensued, and instantly the pursuer became the pursued. The sarus not only put his opponent to flight, but pressed him hard, and the young man got away with some difficulty after discharging both his heavy boots at the angry bird. To add to his troubles, he was compelled to limp back through the grass where the dog-thorns grow.

Sarus are very common in these parts, and remain with us all the year round. They are very beautiful and graceful birds, with soft

grey plumage and dark red-heads. The natives are fond of them, and nobody does them any harm.

Kana Wana the sarraf.

The town near which we are encamped to-day is very old, dating back to the time of Raja Indragupta, or some such person, who ruled here long before the birth of Christ. The present population is not very large, but the town and its surrounding ruins cover some four square miles of country. After heavy showers of rain the boys of the town go out in parties, to search the old ruins in quest of coins. Copper coins are still found plentifully, but gold and silver have now become rare. In this town there lived a *sarraf* by the name of Kana-wana, and it was to this individual that the boys brought their treasure-trove. He was their patron, and as he paid them good prices—at least from their point of view—coin-hunting became quite an

organized business among them. Twice last month we pitched our tents in this neighbourhood; but on both occasions we had sorrowfully to retrace our steps, for the great Kana-wana was not in town. But this morning when we entered the bazaar we were told that the *sarraf* was at home, and that many very rare coins had been recently found, and sold to him. The news delighted us, and we set out immediately for his residence, preceded by a couple of policemen who volunteered their assistance, and followed by a crowd of idlers. But the great man lived in the very heart of the town, and to reach him was no easy matter, for we were averse from walking as we suspected that the town was infected with plague, although the people assured us that it was not; and to get the trap through the narrow and tortuous streets, where the paving had worn into deep ruts and holes,

required patience and dexterity in driving. After a long and tedious journey, through a network of winding streets and dismal alleys, we arrived at the entrance to the dark and noisome gully up which the great Kana-wana dwelt. Here, owing to the narrowness of the roadway, we had to alight and make the best of our way on foot. The crowd behind us had gone on swelling in snowball fashion, and by this time we had quite a hundred persons at our heels. The constables were as keen as bloodhounds; while we, our enthusiasm excited by the accounts heard *en route* of the vast hoard of coins in the *sarraf's* house, just longed to run. Finally, we reached the house—a great brick building with an ornamented façade, and a massive wooden door studded with brass nails—but, alas! the door was closed. The constables, in a cheerful voice, said, "No fear, sahib;

we'll have him out this time." Then they advanced to the door, shouting, "Kana-wana, Kana-wana." Almost at the same instant the door opened, and we found the constables almost turning a somersault down the steps, while the crowd quickly disappeared up the side alleys. It all occurred so suddenly that we had no time to laugh; and when we had recovered from the surprise we found it was no subject for merriment, for the mortal remains of the great *sarraf*—a victim to the plague—were being carried out on a bier, followed by all the members of his household in mourning.

Insect pests.

The heavy rain we had towards the end of December was no doubt very useful to our agricultural friends, but we would rather have dispensed with it, for it has brought forth a great crop of *kumlas*. The *kumla* is a small caterpillar about an inch long,

dressed in a shaggy coat of red-brown hair. There is no doubt whatever that he is an emissary of the devil, for there is no more diabolical little beast in all this vast, vermin-infested land. Silently, and with great stealth, he crawls in through the door, or labours patiently up the walls, and creeps in through the lacing-strings. Once inside, he makes himself comfortable in the folds of towels and clothes hanging from the pegs, and there awaits his victim. Touch him even lightly, and the irritation set up by this contact is so severe that you feel as if a million invisible pins were puncturing your flesh. Your skin swells up into great hard lumps. The agony, especially if the infected surface is large, is acute, and nothing will give relief. The irritation lasts quite an hour, while the swellings remain for a day or more.

## FEBRUARY

Elysian weather.

AFTER a few days of mild weather a cold wave set in during the last week of January, accompanied by rain and a boisterous west wind. It was intensely cold, but when the skies cleared the days were most beautiful. A magician's wand seemed to have waved over the land. The air was so soft and clear that the blue Kumaon hills and the snow-capped pinnacles beyond appeared to have jumped a hundred miles nearer, and all around lay spread the richest of Nature's green carpets, spangled with yellow flowers. The weather now—the 1st of February—is absolutely perfect; it could not be better.

The blood feels like wine in the veins, and rushes on its course as we breast the wind of a morning in pursuit of game. Then back to a preliminary breakfast of hot coffee and biscuits, and we feel that India is not, after all, as black as she is sometimes painted; but—and this is the ant in the honey, the bug on the raspberry—we glance up (I am writing in an inspection bungalow), and there, hanging from the roof, is a set of ghostly ropes, giving the room the appearance of a place of execution. These are the gallows of winter. The *punkah*, accursed symbol of the dog-days, is in the hands of the painter; but the ropes have been left, to remind us that the winter must pass.

The inspection bungalow.

Driven by stress of weather, we sought shelter last week in one of these bungalows. They have been built and are maintained by the Public Works Department, and are

AN INSPECTION BUNGALOW.

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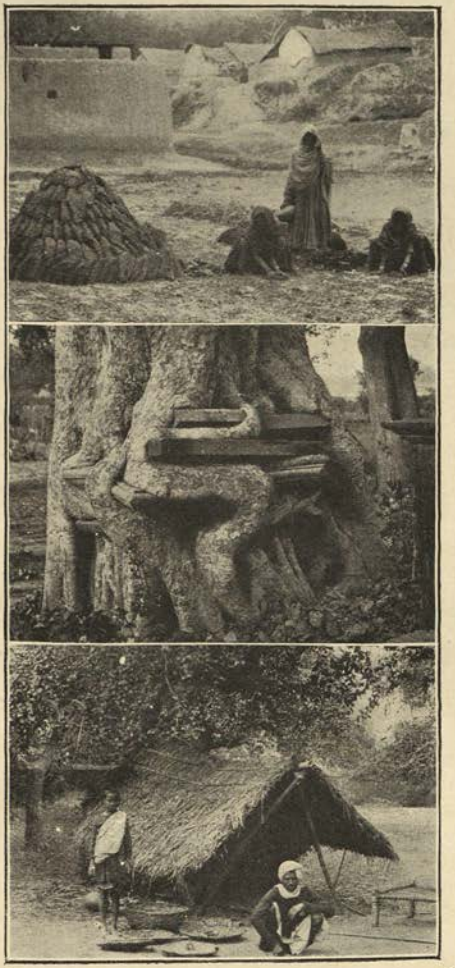
intended primarily for the use of men of that Service. As a general rule they are scantily furnished and very dirty. The dirt is the result of appointing caretakers of the Brahmin persuasion, whose caste prejudices forbid the personal use of duster and broom. The bungalow into which the violence of the storm drove us was, however, quite exceptionally clean and adequately furnished; but the plum watchers in the garden made residence in it almost impossible. On a small plot of ground in front of the house there were some twenty or thirty plum trees, which are let out during the season to the highest bidder. From plum bloom to plum harvest is an interval of about three months, and during the whole of this period the fruit requires to be guarded day and night with unremitting attention. The plum men have erected a grass hut—a sort of sentinel post—in the centre of the

plantation, and from here lines lead out in all directions, and are fastened to pieces of split bamboo and old kerosene tins hung up to the branches. At intervals of some five minutes the operator pulls at the strings and the birds fly off screaming, while the thieving squirrels flatten themselves against the tree-trunks and wait for the storm to pass. All this is bearable during the day-time; but at night, when the marauding flying foxes come, the guard is doubled, and the lines are pulled vigorously three or four at a time. Then, sleep anywhere within a radius of half-a-mile is impossible.

The flying fox.

These midnight marauders are immense bats, resembling a fox in their facial lineaments, and measuring some twenty-four inches between the tips of the wings. The body is small and protected with a coat of reddish-brown fur, while the wings are smooth and



1. MAKING MANURE CAKES.
2. A PIPUL GROWING THROUGH A TOMBSTONE.
3. THE PLUM SELLER.

[*To face p.* 88

attached to the forefeet as in the case of the common bat. They live together in great companies, and usually select the largest tree in the neighbourhood for the family home. In the evening they issue out with the stars, and fall upon the fruit trees, and eat ravenously. By and by Aurora comes and chases them away to their homes in the trees, where they pass the day in noisy accounts of the night's adventures, the while they hang from the branches by their toes. I have heard it said that flying foxes make excellent eating, but I must confess to a reluctance to put them to the test. I have shot these animals by special request for the servants, who use the fat by way of a liniment for rheumatic pains.

A few mornings ago we met quite a string of people, both men and women, who appeared to be engaged in a pilgrimage or bound for a fair. On inquiring their destination, we were

A miracle.

informed that they were repairing to a certain village where a most miraculous event had occurred. From what I could gather from these people, it appeared that in this village there resided an aged couple much attached to each other, but who had gone through life without their union having been blessed with children. They had done all that lay in their power to appease the anger of the gods; had accomplished long and arduous *pilgrimages*; bestowed freely of their wealth; sheltered the homeless and fed the poor; had fed even the ants, and given food and water to the birds; they had also built a temple and made a tank, but all to no purpose. The Brahmins at Benares, at Muthra, had promised them a child; but the gods remained obdurate and the old couple childless. About a week ago the old man died, and his widow, forlorn and sorrowful, prayed earnestly that she might be

freed from the shackles of the flesh, and be permitted to join her husband in the celestial abode. Her prayer was granted. As she stood before the shrine in her own temple one day, muttering her usual supplications, a tongue of flame was seen issuing from her mouth, and in an instant she was consumed. It was a case of *suttee* by spontaneous combustion, and so quickly has the story spread that people are hastening in thousands to worship at the shrine of the saintly widow. What a fortune for the Brahmins of the temple!

The credulity of the peasant is appalling. The Indian rustic is hard to understand, even by those who know him well. I have been much with him this last decade. On cold winter mornings he and I have sat together and warmed ourselves by his manure-cake fire, and while I have trifled with the latest

The Indian Sphinx.

thing in cigarettes, he has placidly and with the perfect contentment of long usage pulled at the bubbling coil of the hookah of his forefathers; at midday we have met in the fields, where I have found him patiently following the narrow and shallow track of his primitive plough, or enjoying with unconcealed relish the simple fare his wife has placed before him; at setting sun I have met him, toil-stained and tired, plodding homewards along the footpath trodden by unnumbered generations of his ancestors; and in the evening, when the smoke hangs low in the humid air, I have found him seated in conclave with his neighbours, discussing the market, or listening, with mouth agape, to the latest rumour; and yet he still remains a riddle to me—a riddle I am not quite able to solve. It is not possible in this country for any white man to be on terms of real intimacy

with the natives, for, apart from all caste prejudices, the natives are distrustful and hold back. My work lies mostly in the country, and during the course of a single touring season I visit from five to six thousand villages, but I must confess I know little of Ram Bux.

This, however, I do know, that he falls an easy prey to the swindler, especially to him who swindles under the cloak of religion, and to the chartered monger of sedition. A child himself, Ram Bux shares with all children an insatiable desire for romance and fairy tale. The possible, the commonplace, the matter-of-fact have but little interest for him. His fare may be simple, but he likes it spicy and hot.

The turn of winter.

A decided change has now come over the weather. To-day is but the 14th of the month, and already the cold has lost its sting

and the midday sun his clemency. The *rabi* (spring crop), in spite of the blight last December, is flourishing; and, the hail permitting, there will be a bumper harvest. Potatoes are still streaming into the market, and are selling at one rupee per *maund;* say, about sixty-four pounds for a shilling. Wheat and barley are in ear, and the rape flowers are fast disappearing. From the guava groves and the plum trees comes the incessant clatter of tin pots and the shouts of the pea-boys, mingled with the chatter of plundering crows and the shrieks of the green parrot. With every breath of wind comes a shower of dead leaves from the *nîm* and the *sirus;* and the jubilant call of the brain-fever bird goes ringing through the land. Enough! Let us enjoy what remains to us of the winter, and think rather of the

POPPY IN FLOWER.

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frost of last December than of the heat of next June.

The poppy fields are now white with flower, showing like patches of snow encircled with green. The plant seems full of health and vigour, and is a sight to gladden the heart of any Chinaman. Opium.

Mention of poppy reminds me of an incident. A few mornings ago, when the bearer brought in the tea, I noticed that he was not very cheerful. It was still early, but sufficient light was streaming in through the meshes of the window net to show me that he wore somewhat of a haggard look which spoke of a wakeful night; and there was something about his mouth suggestive of a suppressed yawn. Presently he unburdened his soul.

"Sahib," said he, "I wish you would

speak to the *bhistie* (water-man). He will not buy himself bedding or warm clothes, and the consequence is that he coughs and keeps us awake the whole night. He has plenty of money, but lends it out on usury. If he dies from the cold I will not bury him, and I have told him so."

While the bearer was still speaking, I heard the old water-man in the direction of the kitchen, and a more hacking and harrowing cough I have never heard. The paroxysm continued for nearly five minutes, and was followed by a series of groans.

"That's the *bhistie*," said the bearer.

I sent for the old man. When he came I found he was dressed in what may have been once a quilted coat, but the padding had long since fallen out, and the garment presented a woe-begone appearance. His

legs were bare, and a bit of coloured cloth adorned his head.

"That coat," remarked the bearer, in a contemptuous voice, and pointing to the ragged garment, "he bought last winter, second-hand, for five annas."

Instantly the old water-man's bile rose, but before he was able to deliver himself a fit of coughing seized him. When he recovered the bearer said—

"He is such a dreadful miser that no one will take his name before breakfast for fear of evil luck. He professes the Mahomedan faith, yet has so far forgotten the teachings of his religion as to deal in usury. His food costs him nothing, as we feed him in return for his filling water for us. He has laid out about twenty or thirty rupees at interest, and has money in his pocket. If you will inspect his

pockets you will find he has plenty of money."

I spoke severely to the old man, warning him that unless he provided himself with a warm coat within a week, I should be compelled to have one made up for him and deduct the cost from his pay.

"Sir, it is not the cold that has brought on the cough," he replied. "I have had no opium for two days, and the cough is the result. You have forbidden us to visit the bazaar on account of the plague, and the camp grocer refuses to supply opium. If I could get even a little opium the cough would not trouble me."

During the course of the day I sent for a tailor, and also for some opium. The drug worked like a charm, and the cough was very quickly cured.

Later, when the old man came before me

for inspection, dressed in his quilted coat of many colours, my thoughts flew to the flower of the field: "For the wind passeth over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more." I trust that wind will not be yet, for when it comes the opium department will lose a valuable customer, and our camp its most picturesque object.

The Birds.

I have lately met three more of my winter friends, the mottled or wood dove, the painted starling, and the blue and white wagtail. As we drive along of a morning the wood-doves rise in great numbers from the road, where they feast on the grain which dribbles out of the sacks on the *banya's* ponies. Like the common starling, its painted brother feeds on grass seeds, frequents *dal* fields, and, to take a butcher's view of the matter, makes excellent eating.

Hymen. Once again, with the advent of balmy spring weather, comes the festival of Hymen. Ram Bux and his family may now be seen decked out in gorgeously-coloured apparel, giving and taking in marriage. It is now 10 p.m. The camp is wrapped in slumber, but from the surrounding villages come the songs of the merrymakers and the beat of the drums. "The *rabi* is full of health and full of promise and needs no further tending, so let us drink and get married, for to-morrow we die." Such seems to be the burden of Ram Bux's song.

A few days ago we happened to be pitched at a village when the nuptials of the native school-master's daughter were being celebrated. The procession, a long line of dazzling colour, headed by the pupils, came parading past the grove where we

were encamped, the boys shouting, apparently for our approval, "God—bless—the—happy—pair. Hip—hip—hurrah! God—bless—the—happy—pair. Hip—hip—hurrah!" The same being repeated over and over again.

The cult of English.

Native school-boys never lose a chance of displaying their knowledge of English. Riding through the village streets of a morning, I am often saluted with "Goot marnin'" by the urchins playing in the dust. In winter weather, school is held out of doors in the sun, the boys being seated round in a circle with the school-master in the centre. I happened to pass by one of these village schools the other day. As soon as the school-master saw me, he said to the boys, "Sahib ata. Angrési bolo" ("A sahib is coming. Talk English"). Immediately the boys, who were at the time reading vernacular, began

shouting out the little English they knew. It was supremely ridiculous. Amid the babel of many voices I caught the following scraps :— "I went on the road, I went on the road;" "Goot marnin', sur;" "The crow he is black;" "Wut you say;" "This is very nice;" and so on. Calling the boys to order, I put them through an examination, and, giving them a few rupees for sweetmeats, got them a holiday.

On a later occasion, I came upon two ragged boys who had apparently fallen out over a game of marbles. As soon as they saw me they discarded native abuse, and thought to impress me by substituting English. The first boy ground his teeth, and shouted "Dum!" His companion, not to be beaten, replied with "Dum, dum!" but the first boy went one better, and frantically yelled "Dum, dum, dum!"

A SUGAR-CANE MILL. [*To face p.* 103

Sugar-cane.

During the past month we have been travelling through some of the principal sugar-cane districts of India, where I have found five varieties of cane under cultivation, viz. *dhour*, *agool*, *metna*, *dagchan* and *channi*. Of these five, *dhour* is first favourite, judging by extent of cultivation; but *metna* is richest in saccharine matter. *Dagchan* is a thick, juicy cane, and is given preference over the others for eating. Ram Bux is at present engaged in the manufacture of *goor*, or crude sugar. The process is simple. The cane is pressed between two vertical rollers, and the juice is boiled down to the point of crystallization in large iron boilers, erected in the open air in one corner of the field.

The pest of Deer.

We are passing through a tract of country teeming with deer. At sunset they come out in great herds from the jungles on the banks of the Ganges, and, after spending the

night in the fields, return to their coverts at sunrise. Ram Bux informs me that he is not able to secure more than eight annas in the rupee (half) of his crop, the balance falling to the share of these animals; and I can quite believe what he says, for there is not a square foot of ground that is not marked with the spoor of deer. Patiently and with much toil he sprinkles his fields over with liquid manure, and it is only by so doing that he is enabled to snatch his half-share from the roving herds.

The phantom black buck.

This morning, while on the march, we came to an extensive barren plain, called *ooser* in these parts, and descried a herd of deer seated in the centre. There were many good heads among them, but none sufficiently good to tempt us. We have been so surfeited with black-buck shooting this winter that we have made it a rule never to pull a

trigger unless we are certain that the horns are not less than twenty-three inches. As we had, however, accomplished more than half the journey, we decided to give the horses a rest, and dismounted within view of the plain. As we rested in the shade, watching the herd, we presently saw a magnificent buck in the distance, leisurely coming in our direction. With the aid of glasses we calculated that his horns were about twenty-seven inches long, so decided to bag him. He was a prize worth having, but proved to be very shy, and, after more than half-an-hour's manœuvring, we found we could not get nearer than three hundred yards; so at that range my wife drew bead and fired. The bullet shot true, and the next moment the buck lay struggling on the ground; but before we could cover the intervening distance he picked himself up and bolted for

the shelter of a *dal* field. We followed with all speed, and made certain we should find him; but our search proved vain. In the very centre of the field we stumbled upon an old man, and were delighted to meet him, for we felt certain he would be able to put us on the track; but in reply to our inquiries he only shook his head, and pointed to his mouth to express that he was dumb. He seemed to be engaged on nothing in particular, was just standing there in the field, but we thought no more of him. Tired and very much disappointed, we returned to our ponies, and found quite a number of villagers collected on the spot. They had come out to see our little son, who was playing with his bearer in the shade of the trees. I informed them of our bad luck, and offered a reward for the horns.

"In which direction did he go?" they asked.

I pointed to the field where we had last seen him.

"Did you look in the field?"

"Yes."

"Did you find an old man there?"

"We did."

"Was he dumb?"

"He was."

"Then, sahib, there is no use in searching, for it was the *bhooth* (ghost) buck you shot. Many *sahiblog* have been here, and oft has that buck been wounded; but no one has yet succeeded in finding him. He always disappears in the same field, and his pursuers have invariably found the old dumb man there. That old man, sahib, belongs to none of these villages.

When you leave this locality the buck you wounded will return to the herd, and the old man will in his turn disappear. That old man, sahib, was the buck in disguise."

## MARCH

THE closing week of February was uncomfortably warm under canvas, but we knew it could not last very long, so, when March dawned and the clouds gathered, we had a mud bank built round the tents, and waited for Jupiter Pluvius to do his worst. There was a great deal of cloud and lightning, but it ended in little more than a sprinkle of rain, which was fortunate for Ram Bux and his ripening crops. We expected hail, but there was none. You can never know what a spring storm will do. It may pass off without doing much damage, or it may, within a very few hours, deprive the cultivator of the fruits of six months' hard toil.

Spring weather

Hail. I well remember a hail-storm about this time a few years back. It came during the dark watches of the night. The next morning the villagers displayed many sad faces, and there was much lamentation. The poppy had disappeared; the *dal* plants stood stripped of every leaf and flower; and the wheat was so battered and shattered that the fields looked as if they had been the scene of some cavalry encounter. The beautiful green fans of the palmyra palms and the delicate banana leaves were torn to ribbons, and presented so strange an appearance that we failed to recognize them, and thought they were some botanical freak sprung from the womb of the night. And the ground appeared as if it had passed through a sudden and violent attack of the smallpox.

Harvesting begins. The harvesting of the spring crop has

begun with the barley and rape-seed. A slight change is discernible in the colour of the wheat fields, but the crop will not be ready for the sickle for another three weeks, for the weather is still cool, and a warm west wind is required to ripen the grain. The *dal* is still in flower, exhaling a sweet perfume. Kaleidoscopic is the scene in the poppy fields of a morning when the village women, clad in brightly-coloured *saris*, with their glass bangles glinting in the sun, are busy with lancet and scraper. The plant has done well, and should produce abundantly.

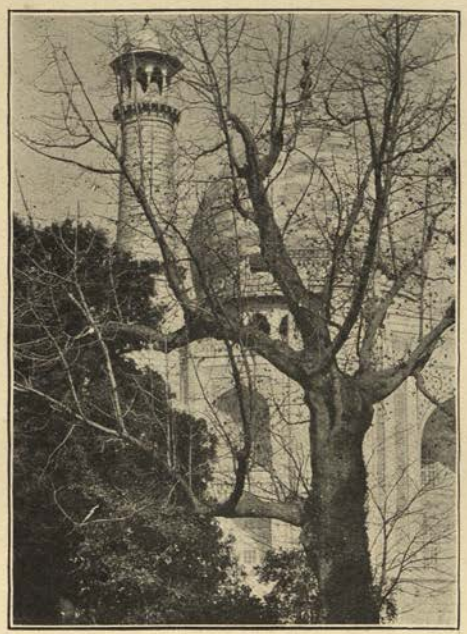
Oats and tobacco.

I was very much surprised to come upon a patch of oats the other day. The grain was still green, but the people were cutting it down for their cattle. It had probably been sown experimentally, for Ram Bux of these parts prefers to grow wheat.

The path I was following led me a little further on into a plot of tobacco, and it was the most wonderful tobacco I have seen. The plants were not less than four feet high, and the leaves must certainly have been eighteen inches across. The pressing of sugar-cane still continues, and the cleared ground is under preparation for fresh sowings.

Leaf and blossom.

Responsive to the voice of spring, the *pipul*, *pakri*, *sisoo* and *tun* have dressed themselves in their new suits of brilliant green. The mangoes have thrown out an abundance of sweet-scented flowers and masses of brightly-tinted foliage; and the *kuchnar*—the mountain ebony—has donned a gay bonnet of purple and white blossom. That giant of the forest, the *saimul*, or cotton tree, is aglow with blood-red bloom, and is daily the scene of much feasting and squabbling among the birds. On the other



THE SAIMUL IN FLOWER.

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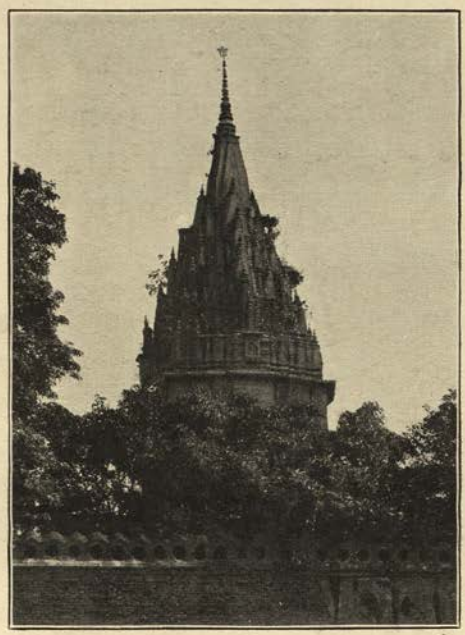
hand, the *nîm* and *sirus* stand defiantly aside, bare and leafless, while the tamarind appears to be contemptuously indifferent to the season. I have already spoken of the Hindu trinity tree; but how many Europeans, I wonder, are familiar with it? For the *pipul* to behave after the manner of a parasite is by no means an uncommon occurrence, for the seed of this tree will adapt itself to most surroundings, and finds the hard, dry fissure in the temple roof or the cleft in the mango tree quite congenial enough for its humble requirements; but the phenomenon is no merely accidental one. The Hindu's mind is steeped in the notion of a trinity in unity, and I have just come upon it once more in a union of the *pipul*, *saimul* and *nîm*, very curious to look upon.

The flame of the Forest.

While in the forest world, I must not omit to mention the *dhak*, which has awakened

from its long winter slumber, and has decked itself with bright-green leaves and flaming flowers. It is, perhaps, the most useless member in all the jungle, so far as man's needs are concerned, for it is not good even for fuel; but during the hot summer months it makes a wonderful display of leaf and flower, and affords a pleasant shelter for the weary birds. Very much in evidence among the more humble specimens of the vegetable world at this season of the year is the *wild aroosa*. It grows into a spreading bush about four feet high, bearing light-green leaves and a wonderful profusion of small white flowers. In village lanes and in jungle parts it grows to great perfection, and, though not very beautiful nor sweetly perfumed, it might be classed above the more common of Nature's wild weeds, for it yields a *khaki* dye, much used by natives.



A TEMPLE IN THE TOILS OF A PIPUL (FICUS RELIGIOSA). [*To face p.* 114

Of garden plants and shrubs there are none in the country worth notice. The people do not cultivate them, and do not seem to care for them. Possibly the common people, who live in a very confined space, have no room for flower-gardens; it cannot be that they have no time, for Ram Bux and his wife contrive to find plenty of time to devote to fairs and pilgrimages. I am inclined to think the people have no taste for flowers. They are fond of colour, but only in regard to personal adornment. If you were to visit a village landlord's *phul-wariya* or flower-garden, you would find an abundance of hideous marigolds, some cocks-comb, and a few bushes of jasmine, with a tree or two of the temple flower; but you would not find the rose, nor the pansy, nor even the common zinnia. Near his house or in the courtyard you will meet the *tulsi*

The absence of flowers.

plant (sweet basil), with a *saligram* reposing in its shade; but the *tulsi* is not there for ornamental purposes. It is a sacred plant worshipped by Ram Bux as the incarnation of the fair Sita.

Vegetables and fruit.

The dearth of vegetable and fruit gardens in the country is also a matter for surprise, considering that Ram Bux is, for the most part, a vegetarian. Fields of potatoes and *brinjals* will be found in every village, but turnips, carrots and cauliflowers, peas, cabbages, tomatoes, and a host of other vegetables commonly found growing in the vicinity of towns, are not to be had in rural parts. As regards fruit, the mango and *jaman* (*Eugenia jambolana*) are extensively grown; the plantain and plum are fairly common; but the orange, citron, leechee and pineapple are conspicuous by their absence.

In the matter of fruit, as in most comestibles, the Aryan brother is influenced more by size than by flavour. If you gave him his choice between an apple and a melon, or between a pear and a good specimen of jack, I know on which his choice would fall. He is used to weights; he weighs his liquids as well as his solids, and compares and judges by weight alone. If you do not wish your memory execrated by the village wight who has retrieved the birds for you, or if you wish your deeds extolled for ever after, pick out the biggest bird from the bag and present it to him. Do not speak to him of flavour, or he will think you mean; give him avoirdupois, and he will make you his hero. This reminds me of an incident. We had been pursuing a wounded black buck for several hours on a very hot day, but towards sunset, when we

Avoirdupois.

came upon the carcass, my fatigue seemed instantly to vanish, for before me stretched a magnificent trophy, the horns taping nearly twenty-seven inches; but the native *shikari* and some others who were with me fell to discussing the probable weight of the animal and its prime condition, completely ignoring the horns. Then, again, consider an Oriental's conception of feminine beauty. I will not say that features, expression and manner do not count, but fatness is an essential requisite—a *sine quâ non.* Stress is laid upon this by native artists in all their paintings. In all matters the native wants his money's worth, and he wants it in weight.

Wandering tribes.

This afternoon, while we were all in the enjoyment of the daily siesta, we were rudely disturbed by the influx of a gang of noisy *banjaras,* who streamed into the

grove with their empty water-pots. They were ejected without much ceremony, as I was under the impression that our visitors were *habooras*, a very dirty tribe, between whom and the source of your water supply there can never be too much distance. In the evening we decided to visit some snipe-grounds, and our path led through the camp of the *banjaras*, which was pitched in an open plain about half-a-mile from ours, and consisted of a number of diminutive grass huts and some old ragged tents. When they saw us approaching they chained up their dogs, which was very considerate, for a *banjara* dog is a most ferocious beast. In a small hut quite near the footpath was seated an old and very stout woman, quite the mother of the gang—a veritable queen-bee. When she saw us coming the poor old thing made frantic efforts to rise, but

the weight of the adipose tissue was more than her strength. Then a young man hastened to her assistance, and she came shuffling up to bid us welcome. She was very fat and perhaps very old. Her costume, which words cannot adequately describe, was peculiar but picturesque. Round her neck were hung several strings of precious stones and real gold coins, and her fingers and wrists were heavily bejewelled. She had a very kind old face; her eyes sparkled like tiny black beads, and she seemed to be much interested in my wife and plied us with many questions. Finally she begged us to be seated on a bed which she had specially brought out for us, but we were unable to stay longer as we had still to call on Jack Snipe and his wife, who live in Mere Hollow. Although there were several members of the gang present, men

as well as women, the old lady alone spoke; and her quiet dignity and the great respect her people paid her impressed us very deeply. These *banjaras* are nomadic traders who wander about throughout the year with droves of cattle, buying and selling grain and other commodities. They are a rude, uneducated people, practising polyandry, but they have fine physique and a very strict code of honour among themselves.

The sorrow of dumb creatures.

How pitiful is the dumb sorrow of animals! Not long ago we were encamped in a grove infested with monkeys. They chattered unceasingly in the trees, and gazed with longing eyes upon the kitchen and the servants' food. Whenever an opportunity offered, down they would leap, and get back as quick as lightning with their spoil, into the shelter of the branches. The man on duty had his time fully occupied in keeping them off the tents

and the meat-safe. Driven from the tents, they concentrated their forces in the trees above the horses and made desperate efforts to purloin the gram soaking in the buckets. What the *syces* (grooms) said to them and what they said to the *syces* is unfit to chronicle here, for the language flowed in scarlet streams. In the evening we took pity on their hungry stomachs, and, calling up the camp grocer, invited the monkeys to a feast of gram. As soon as they had satisfied themselves that we were acting in good faith, down they came in scores, tumbling over each other in mad excitement. The males, great big brutes, roughly fought their way to the centre, rudely pulling aside the ladies by their tails and slapping the faces of the little ones. Presently we noticed a more than usually sad-faced lady approaching. With one arm she clasped a

baby to her breast and made her way with difficulty. As soon as she laid her burden on the ground the cause of her distress was manifest, for the baby was dead. Her attempts to rouse it, and the baffled expression which came stealing over her sad face when the little one failed to respond to her efforts to feed it, were pitiful beyond description. From the mangled state of the body we concluded that it had been dead for many days, and of this we got proof later. That night, in spite of the sentry's efforts to keep them out, some of the monkeys succeeded in making their way into our sleeping-tent. At first we thought thieves were on the prowl; but presently the light cast a shadow on the wall and the room was instantly filled with a most offensive odour. Our visitor was the sad-faced mother in search of shelter for her dead child.

The mad sarraf.

"Sahib, if you are looking for old coins you should go to Baldeo, *sarraf*," said a man in the bazaar.

A perceptible titter went the round of the crowd; but we could not guess what the joke was. A native jokes in a small way and his jokes are often very obscure, so we let it pass.

"Has he many?"

"Plenty. His father had a fancy for old coins, and when he died they passed to his son. Baldeo does not value them, and will let them go cheap."

I asked that some one should be sent to call Baldeo. A boy was told off, but he declined, giving as his excuse his fear that Baldeo might assault him. Finally, as we could persuade no one to go, we had to go ourselves. There was a mystery in the background, but all that we were able to

MAHABIR. [*To face p.* 125

gather was that the *sarraf* suffered occasionally from mild fits of insanity. When we arrived at the house on foot we found a boy seated on a rush stool near the door. He was Baldeo's son-in-law, and informed us that Baldeo was in the adjoining temple engaged in paying homage to the great *Mahabir*. The temple was a few paces off, and as we stood conversing with the boy we heard a great clanking of chains, and a man of gigantic stature stepped out from the sacred edifice. His hair and beard were long and tangled, and a thick iron chain was wound round one of his ankles to prevent him from running.

"That's Baldeo," said the boy in a low whisper.

The man's appearance was truly terrifying. Lunacy blazed in his eyes; physically he was a match for any five ordinary mortals,

and the solemn clanking of the chain gave him the appearance of an escaped convict. We now found ourselves in a very disagreeable predicament. We could not, without humiliation, retreat, and it was clearly dangerous to remain. We had expected to meet a mild lunatic, not a formidable and gigantic maniac. Fortunately, we were standing on a platform some two feet higher than Baldeo; and when he arrived at the platform he looked up, and, seeing us, stopped and inquired of his attendant who we were. When he was told that a *sahib* and *mem sahib* (lady) had come to see him, he flew into a great passion with his servants for having kept us standing, and ordered chairs to be brought out at once. This was reassuring, and we began to feel easier in mind, but a young man shuffled up to me and hurriedly whispered in English,

his lips trembling the while with nervous excitement: "This is not safe. Please go away quick; I will bring coins to your camp."

The demented *sarraf* seemed to be enjoying a lucid interval, but there was no knowing, it seemed, how long it would last; and as every one appeared to be in a very nervous state we decided to withdraw; so we wished Baldeo all good luck from a safe distance, and got back to the trap. Later in the day we got the coins, and learnt that Baldeo was subject to fits of homicidal mania. We could quite believe it.

Leprosy and Coins.

I have always understood that disease germs cannot be conveyed through the medium of metal, and that metal is therefore perfectly safe to handle; also that leprosy is non-contagious; but since making the acquaintance of *sarrafs*, or native money-

changers, I doubt this. We have lately fallen in with many lepers in this profession, and have found the disease confined to the hands. In one case there was barely any pigment left on the hands, and yet the disease had not manifested itself on any other visible part of the man's person.

The Birds. For two months during the springtime the birds are absorbed in domestic occupations. First there is the transport of the material and the building of the little home, then the patient hatching, and, finally, the long and laborious operation of feeding; but in spite of all their labours and anxieties, our little friends are merriest in the spring and sing then their sweetest carols.

At this season of the year the *saimul*, with its scarlet flower-cups full of honey, is most in favour with the birds, and is always crowded with crows, mynas, bulbuls, parrots,

and humming-birds. The green pigeon with its sweet voice haunts the *pipul*, while from the mango boughs comes the monotonous cry of the barbets. The peacock has donned new plumage, and his sweeping tail is wonderfully beautiful. The bullock-runs are now deserted, and the wells are in the possession of cooing pigeons, for it is the time of harvest and the cattle are busy treading out the corn. Through the dark sky, when the world is asleep, go the aquatic birds homewards, for the summer is upon us and the lake-beds are dry.

Marriage festivals.

The marriage festivities continue, and the fun waxes fast and furious. In the towns the *foo-foo* bands are grinding out their clamorous music, and hoards of silver are being poured out into the streets; but the heart of the village maid is sufficiently pleased with a well-dried drum, a pair of tinkling cymbals,

and a roar of voices. As I write, the song of the *chamars* comes floating in upon the night breeze from the neighbouring village, accompanied by the bang of the drum and the clash of cymbals. It is a song with a chorus—more chorus than song—and the men only are singing. The tune is familiar, for I have often heard it at this season of the year; but the words are lost in space before they reach me.

The cult of Europe.

A few days ago I met a marriage-party in a village lane. The people were richly dressed and riding in carts drawn by magnificent bulls, gorgeously caparisoned. They were well-to-do village folk, and seemed bent on making a show. With this object in view they had invested in an article of furniture not usually found in country homes, and were parading it proudly at the head of the procession. It was a double

bedstead of English pattern, got up in brilliant colours and splashed with gold and silver tinsel. It was meant to make an impression, and there is no denying that it did.

The gong at the Police Station is telling the midnight hour. The hush of sleep has fallen upon the camp, and I, too, must rest. Outside the world is bathed in milk-white moonlight, and stealing over the dewy fields comes the song from the village, telling of marriage in the *chamars'* quarter. Night.

* * * * *

To-day is but the 31st of March, yet the temperature has already reached 98°. As I watched the mercury steadily climbing up this afternoon, degree by degree, I was glad to feel that my wife and Sonny Baba are comfortably settled in a bungalow at head-quarters, and have something more sub-

stantial between themselves and the sun's rays than the piece of canvas over my head. They have been out with me on tour since the 1st of October last, which makes six months, all but five days, and have during that time traversed some twelve hundred miles by road, which is no mean performance for an English lady with a child not yet three years old.

## APRIL

"Farewell, happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells; hail, Horror, hail!

The advancing Summer.

To-day is the 5th of April. I have left my camp in the dust and glare of the district, and have come in for a few days on a visit to my wife and child. The winter has now finally gone. The scent of *khus-khus* pervades our darkened chambers, the *punkah-wallas* (fan-pullers) are back again in the same old place in the verandah, as somnolent as ever, and the oil has resumed its trickle from the wheel. Throughout the long day a fierce, hot wind howls at every door and window; and in the evening, when it dies down, the dust is left suspended in the

still atmosphere. Then the sun goes to rest in a blood-red haze. The winter has departed, and we have three months of blistering heat before us. But should we complain? Have we not just enjoyed six months of delightful weather? Even now the beneficent monsoon is preparing from distant seas to hasten to our relief. Let us try to be philosophical, and call to mind the Eastern proverb—

Optimism.

> "The wheels of fortune are always on the move,
> And every spoke comes uppermost in turn."

That will help us to bear the heat and swallow the dust of the next three months.

Pessimism.

The 10th of April. I am back once again in my camp. When I wrote five days ago I was seated in a cool bungalow with a fan swinging overhead and a cool drink at hand. 'Twas easy to be philosophical under those conditions, but under these——

Wind and dust! Dust and wind! Never-ceasing, inexhaustible, all-pervading. The country is being swept by a strong west wind, and all nature is enveloped in dust. To-day the wind and dust are worse than ever. The wind is screaming with a demon's hundred voices through the grove, and so thick is the flying dust that the landscape is completely obscured. There is no keeping the dust out in camp. My eyes are sore from it, my voice hoarse from it; I feel it crunching between my teeth, and it lies in a thick deposit on my hair. The carpet has all but disappeared; the tablecloth is showing up in patches, and the counterpane is a sheet of dust. Breakfast is seasoned with it; lunch is undiluted dust; dinner savours of it. It is mixed with my tea, spread on my toast, and lurks at the bottom of my peg. But 'tis an ill wind indeed that blows no one any

good. When the curtain of dust lifts during a moment of calm, I catch a glimpse of Ram Bux and his family busy in the hot fields winnowing their grain. On a windless day Ram Bux finds his labours increased, for the requisite draught for winnowing operations must be produced by hand-power, and three men are required where one will do when Æolus is kind. And then the dust—if it annoys me, it profits Ram Bux, who sells it with his grain.

Nature the Compensator.

With the hottest weather comes Nature with both her hands full of the most cooling fruits. Out on that bare, wind-swept island, where the glare is blinding and the heat terrific, the melon plant, green and cool, spreads itself out on the burning sand, behind frail shelters, and yields an all but ice-cold fruit in great abundance. Both varieties, water and musk, are already in the market,

PAPITA.

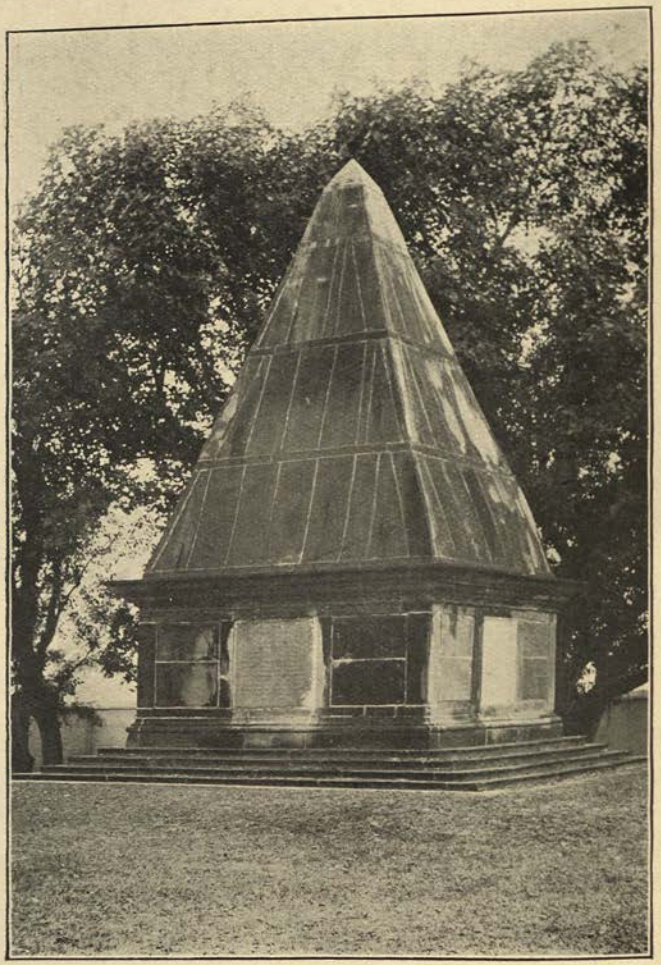
[*To face p.* 137

but the prices at present are somewhat high, as this is only the beginning of the season. A fortnight later and the poorest man in the country will be able to buy as much of this fruit as he and his family can find a use for. The famous *safaida*, or white-fleshed melon of Lucknow, is undoubtedly the finest specimen of its kind in these provinces. In size it is somewhat smaller than the common variety, but in flavour and sweetness it far excels it. An exceedingly pleasant fruit at this season of the year is the *papita* or *Carica papaya*, but it must be eaten while fresh, and iced for preference. It is nicest in the morning, when one comes home hot from a ride. The fruit of this tree, or its juice, has the singular property of rendering the toughest meat tender, and this is said to be effected (I should add in America) even by hanging the meat among

the branches. A little *papita* juice and a piece of meat in a tumbler, and you have before you a practical illustration of the process of digestion as it takes place in the healthy human stomach. *Papita*, then, is a good digestive, but if one ate too much there might be the risk of digesting oneself!

Thirst-quenchers.

During the scorching summer months, when the air is so thick with dust that one might almost cleave it with a hatchet, and when the dry, hot winds suck us at every pore, man is the victim of an insatiable thirst. Hot tea is unpleasant, cold tea is nauseating; coffee and cocoa are heating; water is insipid and lacks bite; spirits are harmful; what, then, is a wretched man to drink? Let us search in Nature's great storehouse and ascertain what she has to give us. Tamarind and *bail!* They make



THE MONUMENT AT BITAURA. [*To face p.* 139

an excellent drink for a hot day, and are most wholesome.

A forgotten battlefield.

I had occasion last week to visit a small village in the district of Bareilly, named Fatehgunge. While camped there, I was informed of a monument in the neighbourhood marking the battlefield of Bitaura, and erected in memory of the British troops killed in action against the Rohillas. So in the evening, when the fierce wind had somewhat abated, I walked out to inspect the memorial. It is visible from a long way off, being perched on a mound, apparently the site of ancient Bitaura. Within the enclosure, and to the west of the monument, stands a large and flourishing *bohr* tree, which casts a pleasant shade over the tomb —if tomb it be—and protects it from the summer storms. The enclosing wall and gateway are painted white and grey; but

the tomb itself is black with the mould of years, as tombs should be. It is a square sandstone structure, some ten feet in height, standing on a rectangular plinth rising in tiers, and surmounted by a masonry pyramid which adds another ten or fifteen feet to the pile. On a marble tablet the following lines are inscribed—

ERECTED

BY ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

IN COUNCIL

IN MEMORY OF

COLONEL GEORGE BURRINGTON, MAJOR THOMAS BOLTON, CAPTAIN NOR. MACLEOD, CAPTAIN JOHN MANBEY, CAPTAIN JOHN MORDAUNT, LIEUTENANT AND. CUMINGS, LIEUTENANT EDMUND WELLS, LIEUTENANT WILLIAM HINKSMAN, LIEUTENANT JOSEPH RICHARDSON, LIEUTENANT JOHN PLUMER, LIEUTENANT J. Z. M. BIRCH, LIEUTENANT WILLIAM ODELL, LIEUTENANT EDWARD BAKER, LIEUTENANT FIREW JAMES TILFER, AND THE EUROPEAN AND NATIVE NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND PRIVATES, WHO FELL NEAR THIS SPOT IN ACTION AGAINST THE ROHILLAS, THE 24TH OF OCTOBER, A.D. 1794.

The Rohillas, who fought with great determination and valour, were completely overthrown, but not without a loss on our side of fourteen British officers and some six hundred men.

The rule of the Rohillas was of short duration, lasting as it did from 1740 to 1774, when their dominion came to an end on the battlefield of Miranpur-Katra, where they received a signal defeat at the hands of the allied forces of the British and the Nawab Vazir of Oudh. The Rohillas.

Previous to the advent of these Rohillas —a wild Afghan people from across the North-West Frontier—the country now known as Rohilkhand was called Katehr. Early in the eighteenth century, and after the death of the Emperor Aurangzeb, a Rohilla soldier, a man of enterprise and daring, one Ali Mahomed Khan, threw off his

allegiance to the throne of Delhi, and unfurled his own standard at Katehr, thenceforth to be known as Rohilkhand. In 1740 the Emperor Mahomed Shah recognized Ali Mahomed Khan as governor of Rohilkhand, and for five years he reigned undisputed master over his newly acquired territory. But then came a quarrel with Safdar Jang, the Subehdar of Oudh, and on the matter being referred to the Court at Delhi the emperor himself came down at the head of a large force to bring his recalcitrant governor to reason. Deserted by his troops, Ali Mahomed Khan tendered his submission and was taken in chains to Delhi; but soon after he contrived to get into favour, and was appointed to the governorship of Sirhind. In 1748 Ali Mahomed Khan succeeded in returning to Rohilkhand, and once again took possession

of the country; but his reign was short-lived, for in the following year he died at his capital of Aonla, leaving his uncle, Hafiz Rahmat Khan, as guardian of his younger sons during their minority; the two elder sons being at the time absent at Kandahar. Hafiz Rahmat Khan proved unfaithful to his trust; and in a very short time had appropriated to himself a large portion of Rohilkhand. He was, however, a good and wise ruler, and under him the Rohilla people became prosperous. Now at that time the Nawab Vazir of Oudh was Suja-ud-dowlah, a man of aggressive and unscrupulous character, who had set his heart on the acquisition of the fair province of Rohilkhand, which was conterminous with his own; and whatever justification people may find in the political necessities of the time, under stress of which the British Government

consented to the subjugation of Rohilkhand and even lent the Nawab the services of a British brigade, the war was one of pure aggression.

The Battle. The English brigade, under the command of Colonel Champion, and the Oudh forces, led by the Nawab Vazir in person, met the army of the Rohillas, under the leadership of Hafiz Rahmat Khan, at Miranpur-Katra, on the 23rd of April, 1774. In the fight which ensued Hafiz Rahmat Khan was killed, with about two thousand of his followers, and the dominion of the Rohillas came to an end; but there still remained Faiz-ullah Khan, the eldest surviving son of Ali Mahomed Khan. On the death of the usurper Hafiz Rahmat Khan, Faiz-ullah Khan became the acknowledged head of the Rohillas. Defeated at Miranpur-Katra he fled to Rampur, and

thence to the Garwhal mountains, where, six months later, a treaty was concluded between him and the Nawab Suja-ud-dowlah which gave him the city and district of Rampur. In July 1794 he died, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Mahomed Ali Khan. This man proved an unpopular ruler, and his younger brother, Gulam Mahomed Khan, had him murdered and seized the throne for himself. To avenge this murder and bring the usurper to justice, a British force, under Sir Ralf Abercrombie, was despatched to Rampur; but Gulam Mahomed Khan marched out with a force of some twenty-five thousand men and attacked the British at Bitaura. The sudden onslaught resulted in the discomfiture of our native cavalry, and we all but had a serious disaster. The cool courage of the British troops alone saved the day. The Rohillas were defeated,

but at the cost of the lives of six hundred of our men and fourteen European officers.

Gulam Mahomed Khan surrendered and was banished to Benares, and the infant son of Mahomed Ali Khan was placed on the Rampur throne.

Seven years later the fair province of Rohilkhand passed peacefully into our hands.[1]

The carnival of Spring.

'Tis the carnival of spring, and all nature is revelling in a riot of colour. Where everything is beautiful it seems almost ungrateful to make comparisons; but a few of the more striking costumes may be noticed. The mango is particularly conspicuous, with great heavy masses of green and gold foliage, beautifully burnished; but for shade there is, perhaps, no tree in all India to equal the *jaman*. It is now in flower, and presents

[1] Vide *Warren Hastings and the Rohilla War*, by Sir John Strachey.

just a solid impenetrable mass of leaves to the sun's rays. Then there is the spreading *sirus* with its beautiful leaves and exquisitely scented powder-puff blossoms, and the stately *nausath*, crowded with warm red bloom. Even the much-despised, *ooser*-loving *babúl* is worth a moment's attention during the month of April, when it is heavily laden with long scallopy beans and a wealth of feathery foliage. Fringing the burning river-banks, where no other kind of vegetation will prosper, the tamarisk is enjoying the very lust of health, and bordering the tamarisk is a wide belt of brilliantly green *javasa*, or camelthorn, interspersed with *surai*, now tufted with tiny purple flowers. A few trees only have not yet joined the carnival. The Indian laburnum, or *amaltas*, has not yet arisen from her long *koombkaran* sleep; but in May she will come forth as

resplendent and as gorgeous as an Eastern bride. Then there is the *nîm.* She has shaken off her old dust-stained garments, and is actively engaged in donning the new. A little while, and she will join the happy throng as pleasant and as radiant as any.

But what am I to say of the *mohwa?* Her best friend's voice is silent. Botanists call her *Bassia Lati-folia;* but I am sure she does not deserve so fine a name. She is a shameless and drunken hussy—drunk on her own sap. From her fruit there is distilled a nasty-smelling and most potent liquor? Look! there she stands, a chaplet of evil-smelling flowers on her head, but the rest of her bare. How very crooked and knotted are her limbs. Faugh! let us away, the smell is overpowering. But whom have we here? An old woman, bent of frame, with silver hair and the tiniest holes for eyes. She comes with a

basket under her arm to gather up the fallen *mohwa* flowers. Patiently she picks them up, one by one, and carefully deposits them in the basket; then hies she back to her gourd-covered hut in the village, leaving a trail of pot-house reek behind her, and there spreads out the flowers in the sun to dry. Some she makes up into pudding, which the boys enjoy on their return home with the cattle at sunset, and for the rest she gets a few shells from the village distillery.

The music and colour of the Birds.

The birds are as joyful and resplendent in their new raiment as the trees, and they are inseparable friends, the very complements of each other. The birds are once again safely over their domestic troubles, and the air is full of song. Even as I write, a *dyal* (magpie) is discoursing the sweetest melody in the boughs overhead; and it is pleasant to listen to the musical whistle of the green

pigeons in the *pipul* trees. Presently there comes a flash of yellow against the green trees, accompanied by a sweet call, and the oriole goes past. Deprived of his shelter in the fields, the peacock has come to spend the hot noontide hours in the shade of the grove. He is here now under the *jaman*, panting with heat, but looking very beautiful. The *satbhaiṣ* (seven-brothers), or, as we call them, the seven-sisters, are here also. I can count only six, but doubtless the seventh is somewhere in the neighbourhood. They are great talkers, always jabbering, jabbering; but I like them because they are inclined to be friendly and confiding. They have come down from the trees now, and are hopping about searching in the dust for their food. They were here yesterday, too, and are now installed as regular recipients of my bounty.

When I left the tent just now to minister to the wants of the *satbhais*, I heard the whistle of the *raja lals* or the red kings, and, looking up, found quite a number of them in the trees. The kings are red and black, and the queens are yellow. They are very restless little birds, and have already gone.

Ram Bux at harvest.

Ram Bux and all the members of his household, from his blind grandmother to his last infant, are now in the fields, busy with sickle and sheaf; but harvesting operations in India take a very long time, and the last of the grain will not be in before, perhaps, the close of May. Ram Bux has sweated a good deal over the crop, and is loath to part with it. There is also that noble family motto, "Do not do to-day what may be left undone till to-morrow," which is enshrined in his heart—the legacy of countless

generations; and before which he and his family bow down daily in humblest worship.

The rise in prices under British rule.

The spring crop has not fulfilled its early promise, but there is plenty for every one. Some fifty years ago the country produce of India, so the village greybeards tell me, was more than fifty per cent. cheaper than now. If this be correct, then the halcyon days have gone; but "cheap" is still the only word I can apply to the prices ruling. New wheat is selling at eighteen *seers* for the rupee; barley, thirty-two *seers*; *dal*, twenty *seers*; and potatoes from thirty-five *seers* to a *maund*. Now, converting these rates into English weights and money, we have:—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wheat, 27 | pounds | the | shilling. |
| Barley, 48 | „ | „ | „ |
| *Dal*, 30 | „ | „ | „ |
| Potatoes, from 52½ to 60 | „ | „ | „ |

Other food-stuffs are proportionately cheap.

The prices of garden and dairy produce are also very moderate. Milk may be had in any village at a penny a quart, and a shilling's worth of vegetables last one a month. Our servants live in camp on about three rupees, or four shillings, a month per head, and live well. India is a very cheap country as regards food, European provisions excepted, but our bills on account of the pay of servants are always very high. There are only three of us—my wife, Sonny Baba, and I; yet we are compelled to keep the following staff of servants :—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 cook . . . . . | pay | 12 | Rs. per *mensem.* |
| 1 table servant . . . . . | „ | 10 | „ |
| 2 bearers. . . . . | „ | 20 | „ |
| 1 *ayah* (woman servant) . | „ | 10 | „ |
| 2 *syces* (grooms) . . . . | „ | 14 | „ |
| 1 waterman . . . . . | „ | 6 | „ |
| 1 sweeper . . . . . | „ | 6 | „ |
| 1 washerman. . . . . | „ | 10 | „ |
| 2 grasscuts . . . . . | „ | 10 | „ |

During the summer months—from the 15th of April to the 15th of October—we have also to keep four *punkah* men, at five rupees each. Our servants, therefore, cost us, including their winter uniforms, no less than £100 per annum. Many people are compelled to spend twice or thrice as much. There is no escape from this, for Custom is a mighty god in India and his laws are inviolate. A native servant will not, and in some castes dare not, do any work outside his own province for fear of being excommunicated by his caste fellows, under the charge of having snatched the bread from the mouth of a fellow-servant. Food, then, in India is cheap; but nearly everything else is very expensive.

A rural tragedy.

Talking of the crops reminds me of a most distressing spectacle I witnessed a few days ago. About nine at night, just as I was drop-

A THRESHING-FLOOR. [*To face p.* 155

ping off to sleep, I heard a great cry go up from the village near the camp, and my tents were instantly brightly illuminated. Hearing the patter of many feet as the crowd swept past the tents, calling to one another at the tops of their voices, I hurried out; but immediately I saw what had caused the alarm, I felt I had been dealt a blow. It was no riot, dear reader, but only a village threshing-floor in flames. No personal interest of mine was involved; but the cruelty of it touched me as though it were my own. The great red flame sprang high up into the air, and before the people were able to reach the scene the whole threshing-floor was involved. The salvage parties made heroic efforts to save a part of the produce, but the heat and smoke drove them back; and within the short space of half-an-hour there was nothing left but a heap of ashes—the

bitterest of bitter ashes. A whole year of some one's hard toil—countless sleepless nights and arduous days—all had been spent in vain.

Presently night resumed her sway, and a heavy gloom settled over the scene of the tragedy.

The wail of the broken-hearted old women as they crawled back to their homes past the tents was pitiful beyond the expression of words. They beat their breasts crying, "A-re bhiya, bhiya re!" ("O my brother, my brother!")

## MAY

THE month of April passed away without a drop of rain. The days were very hot, but the nights surprisingly cool, and the winter lingered in the early hours quite to the close of the month. After the heat of the day it was a pleasure to issue out into the damp night air and to sleep under an open sky, unworried by mosquitoes, and a fitful and uncertain punkah. But now the nights are still and warm, and sudden dust-storms sweeping through the dark hours drive one to the shelter of a dark and oppressive bedroom.

May and its dust and rain.

The first dust-storm of the season visited our camp on the 6th of May. It swept through the grove, stirring up the carpet of

dead leaves, tearing great branches off the trees overhead, and overturning the servants' tents. Following fast upon the dust came a shower of hailstones, which caused much excitement among the horses. This was followed by a heavy downpour of rain, which sent the mercury down some twenty degrees. Close by the camp Ram Bux had spent the day ploughing up a piece of land grown over with *khus-khus* grass, and when the storm passed off, the wetted roots filled the night air with their perfume. The frogs croaked with delight in the muddy pools, and hosts of insects issued from their mysterious hiding-places. Huge black scorpions hurriedly left their waterlogged dwellings and sought safety on the tent pegs. Later, when some of the tents were struck, these intruders were discovered, but not before three of the servants had been stung.

If you are out in the cool of the early hours you will meet Ram Bux driving his unwilling team to the threshing-floor. He works there till ten o'clock, then retires to the shelter of a mango tope, where the hot hours are passed in sleep. In the evening he resumes his labours and works till night-fall. For nearly two months the sheaves have been stacked on the threshing-floor, exposed to wind and weather, but Ram Bux is in no apparent hurry to get the grain in, for the monsoon is still a long way off, and there is nothing doing in the fields. He has sown his small plot of sugar-cane, and the watering of it has been entrusted to his wife and children.

Ram Bux at the threshing-floors.

In the dubious light of early morning, a villager strode off to his palm plantation. There among the fronds of one of the trees he descried a black object ; and, thinking he

Adventure with a bear

had surprised a fellow-villager in the surreptitious enjoyment of his toddy, he charged his sling and the stone shot straight to the mark. Quicker than lightning came the black object down with death in his grasp. It was a bear. Later the poor man's relations came out to search for him, and finding him scattered in pieces they gathered him up in baskets, and consigned him, per Ganges river, to toddy-flowing Paradise or elsewhere.

Palm drink. A few days ago I chanced to be pitched in the vicinity of a small plantation of palmyra and date palms. The lessees, an old man and his two sons, have built themselves a most picturesque little hut wholly of palm leaves, and are much patronized by the people of the neighbouring village. Early one morning I paid the hut a visit. The boys were out, but the old father was at home. He was seated behind a row of earthen pots, full of

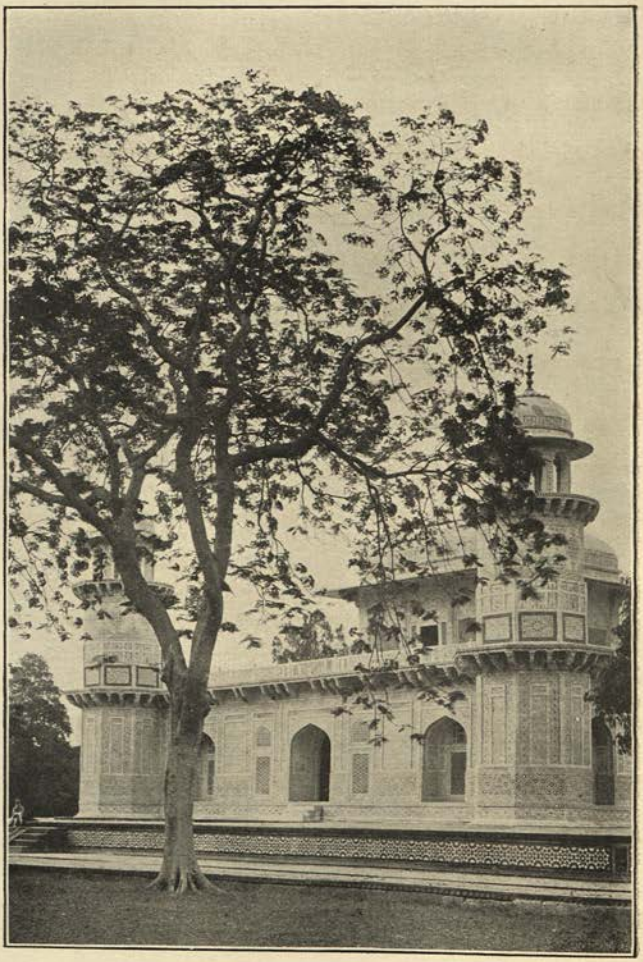
THE TODDY SHOP. [*To face p.* 160

frothing liquor, waiting for his customers. A bleary look about his eyes and an unsteady voice told of deep draughts and a sedentary occupation. While I was talking with him his sons returned, bringing with them more pots of sap, and on their leaving for a further supply I accompanied them. Selecting a tree which had not already been visited that morning, one of the boys fastened an empty vessel by a string to his waist, and placing a loop of rope round his ankles, to aid him in climbing, ascended the tree with marvellous rapidity. An incision had been made at the base of the lowest fronds the evening before, and an empty *chatty* had been placed in position to catch the exuding sap. Now the vessel was full. The boy poured its contents into the vessel hung about his waist, and after making a fresh incision against the morrow's supply, came

down the tree. There were also some date palms in the plantation, from which the sap was extracted in the same manner. The sap of the date palm is somewhat sweeter than that of the palmyra; but both are nauseating. Yet the natives are fond of the drink and consume very large quantities, often as much as three quarts at a time. While fresh, this liquor has no intoxicating powers, and is said to possess alimentary properties; but if kept for more than twenty-four hours fermentation sets in and the liquor then becomes intoxicant; but a very large quantity has to be consumed before any appreciable effect is noticed. For those who are able to drink it, toddy makes a cool and not unwholesome drink these hot, dusty days.

The abstemious Oriental.

The natives of India, on the whole, are a wonderfully sober and abstemious people, and in this respect compare favourably with



POINCIANA REGIA IN FLOWER. [*To face p.* 163

Europeans. Some of the lower castes, such as *chamars*, and *dhobies* (washermen), are inveterate drunkards, but Hindus of the upper classes touch nothing strong. Mahomedans are forbidden by their religion to touch intoxicating liquors, though there are some backsliders among them. The native has many faults ; but, be it said to his credit, drink is not one of them.

Flowers

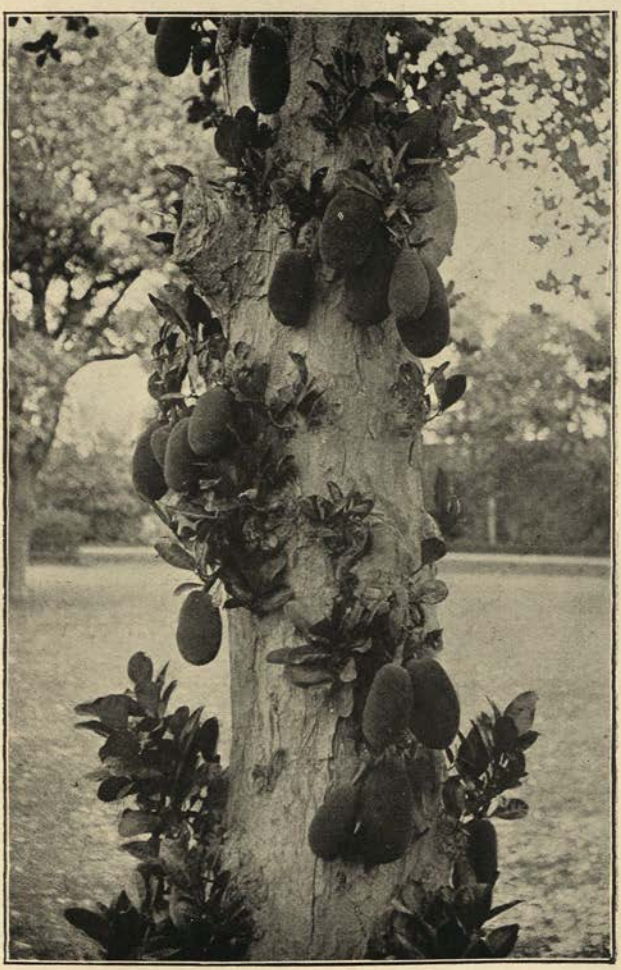
Conspicuous among the host of India's most beautiful trees are the *Poinciana Regia* and the *amaltas* or Indian laburnum. They are now in flower, in spite of the fiery hot winds and burning heat, and are noticeable from a long distance off. The pendulous racemes of the *amaltas* resemble nothing so much as huge bunches of yellow grapes in a setting of bronze and dark green foliage.

and Fruit.

The strong scent of the fast-ripening jack fruit is very perceptible in the early

mornings in the neighbourhood of the trees. The fruit hangs from the trunk by a short stem, and often grows to enormous proportions, a single specimen weighing sometimes as much as forty pounds. Its strong scent and sickly flavour repel the European, but Ram Bux appreciates it, and his children gorge on it till they can contain no more. One of the nicest of India's many nice fruits is the leechee, which is now in the market. It is cultivated somewhat sparsely in these provinces; but very extensively in the damp country of Behar, where it grows to great perfection, and may be had in almost every village. The Gulzaribagh leechees grown at Mozufferpur, the capital of Behar, are the finest of their kind in India.

A very common shrub in these parts is the *mendi*. It is sown in all village gardens, and



JACK FRUIT. [*To face p.* 164

may be known by its heavy clusters of tiny greenish white flowers, delicately perfumed. The fresh leaves are beaten up with catechu and used by native women as a stain for the finger-nails and by the men as a dye for the hair.

A Survivor of the Mutiny.

Storm-driven, we sought shelter the other day in the *chaupal*, or guest-house, of a small village. There were several natives present, and we soon fell into conversation. Presently my peon spoke.

"This man, sahib," said he, pointing to a man in the crowd, "was a rebel in the Mutiny."

The man to whom my attention was thus dramatically drawn was a clean-shaven, mild-faced Hindu, in appearance not more than about fifty years of age, but he must have been sixty-five, for he was eighteen years old, according to his own statement, in the Mutiny.

I could not resist asking him how he had escaped the penalty of rebellion.

He laughed good-naturedly.

"I was in hiding," he replied, "until I heard that the Queen had sent her pardon to all those who had taken up arms against the Government. But we murdered no one. We remained in the fort with Narpat Sing, and when the *sahiblog* came we fought. Then the general *sahib* was killed, and becoming very frightened, we left the fort at night and hid in the surrounding villages."

"Where did this occur?" I asked.

"At Rooyah," he replied, "two miles from here. The general is buried at Rudamow, one mile from Rooyah."

The old fort at Rooyah.

The dust-storm over, I rode on to Rooyah to inspect the old fort. Nothing remains now but a collection of low mounds strewn with potsherds and the fragments of bricks,

and grown over with *babúl* and the wild *aroosa*, the very emblems of desolation. Here, long years ago, stood the fort of Rooyah, a picturesque though rudely fashioned structure, with its bastions and turrets reflected in the clear blue waters of a *jheel* below.

Seven-and-forty years ago there came to Fort Rooyah an impetuous British commander, who straightway knocked his head against its walls and recoiled with a loss it is not easy even now to condone.

The Cemetery.

One mile beyond Rooyah, in the cool shade of a mango tope, known locally as "Latsahib ka bagh" (the Lordsahib's grove), lies a small cemetery hallowed to the memory of the ill-fated victims of that British commander's blunder. The cemetery is not very beautiful. It is in the charge of a native caretaker, who has laid

out the grounds in a wonderfully intricate design of clay beds and pathways; whose only advantage lies in the fact that they need no watering, while an occasional renewal of the plaster is warranted to keep down all vegetation.

Let into the further wall of the burial-ground, and facing the gate as one enters, is a small marble tablet, bearing the following inscription—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
BRIGADIER THE HON'BLE ADRIAN HOPE;
LIEUT. CHARLES DOUGLAS, 42ND ROYAL HIGHLRS.;
LIEUT. ALFRED JENNINGS BRAMLEY, 42ND ROYAL HIGHLRS.;
LIEUT. H. WILLOUGHBY, 4TH PUNJAB INFANTRY;
WHO FELL AT FORT ROOYAH
ON THE 15TH APRIL, 1858.

Within the enclosure, on the right-hand side,

is the grave of that splendid soldier, Adrian Hope, inscribed—

BRIGADIER
THE HON'BLE
ADRIAN HOPE, C.B.
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL
93RD HIGHLANDERS.
BORN 3RD MARCH, 1821;
KILLED AT ROOYAH
15TH OF APRIL,
1858.

In the left corner of the cemetery there are three masonry graves; two bear no inscriptions; the third is the grave of a native Christian woman, the wife of the landlord of Rudamow, who died *in this* locality on the 23rd of September, 1886. There are also several heaplets of earth scattered about the enclosure, which mark, one supposes, the more humble resting-places of the privates

who fell in action on the memorable 15th of April, 1858.

Here is the story.

The story of Fort Rooyah.

General Walpole, who, it appears, had never before held independent command, was ordered to lead an expedition up the left bank of the Ganges from Lucknow to Rohilkhand, to clear the rebels out of that part of the country. The brigade set out from Lucknow on the 7th of April, 1858, and on the morning of the 15th found itself in the vicinity of Fort Rooyah. The troops had marched in nine miles that morning; but Walpole, anxious to win his spurs with the least possible delay, sent his force immediately to the assault.

The fort was the residence of a rebel landholder named Narpat Sing. He had but three hundred followers at his command; but, taking advantage of the troubles which

beset the British in India in the dark days of 1857, he unfurled the flag of rebellion at Rooyah and bade the Government defiance.

His stronghold was nothing very formidable. On its northern and eastern faces it was strongly defended by a high mud wall and a broad and deep ditch, and covered by a dense jungle; but from the west and south it was open to attack, as the wall on those sides was but a few feet high, the defenders relying mainly on the *jheel*, the waters of which lapped the fort, to protect them from their enemies coming from that direction. There were two gates to the fort, and these opened on the sides just mentioned; and there is no doubt that had General Walpole delivered the assault from that direction the fort must have been quickly reduced, with but a fraction of the casualties which actually occurred. It was the month of April, and

the water of the *jheel* was everywhere very shallow, and in many places dried up, so that the only obstacle to an assaulting party from that side was lacking.

But General Walpole took no trouble to reconnoitre; and, without even a cursory examination of the position, launched his men in a blundering and haphazard manner against the strongest face of the fort.

The rebels, it was reported, were prepared to evacuate the place after firing a few rounds; but when they saw the British advancing against the face which could be defended, they changed their minds and determined to show fight.

Now Walpole, under the mistaken impression that there was a gate on the east side of the fort, directed Captain Ross Grove to advance with a company of the 42nd Highlanders through the wood in that

direction, and to hold the gate and prevent the enemy from escaping. The company advanced in skirmishing order through the jungle before them; and dashing across the open space of ground which lay between the forest and the fort, found their progress impeded by the ditch, which had up till then been invisible. There was no alternative but to lie down on the edge of the counter-scarp; and as there were only a few paces between them and the enemy, and no shelter whatever, they were exposed to a galling fire and suffered severely. They held on to their position, however, in a most heroic manner, awaiting the development of the attack in other directions; but finding, after a time, that no other attack was being made, Grove sent word to the general to tell him that there was no gate, and requested scaling-ladders for an escalade. Meanwhile

Captain Cafe, wholly unaware of the ditch which had checked Grove in his advance, came up with his Sikhs and dashed into it. With no ladders to help them out again, they were shot down without mercy by the enemy. Amongst those killed was Lieutenant H. Willoughby, of the 4th Punjab Infantry.[1]

No orders had as yet reached Grove, nor were the scaling-ladders forthcoming, so a second messenger was despatched to the general, asking for reinforcements. The general, apparently now alarmed at the consequences of his own rashness, hastily sent the heavy guns round to the west, and ordered a bombardment of the fort from that side.

A very natural result followed. Some of

[1] His name is given by Malleson and Kaye, upon whom I have drawn, as Edward Willoughby, of the 10th Bombay Native Infantry.

the balls from the guns, going over the fort, fell among our men on the other side, for they had not yet been withdrawn. A report to this effect was carried to Adrian Hope, who at once rode off to inform Walpole, but from what followed it appears the latter doubted the accuracy of the statement, for Hope immediately returned to see for himself.

"Good God! General," exclaimed Grove, on seeing him, "this is no place for you. You must lie down." But the kindly warning came too late, for even at that moment Hope fell back into the speaker's arms, shot through the chest. Soon after came the order to retire, and General Walpole rode back to camp.

According to Kaye, Lieutenant Harrington, of the Artillery, was also killed, but his name is strangely omitted from the memorial tablet.

Under cover of the darkness that night the rebels slipped out of the fort and made good their escape.

"The loss the country sustained by the death of Willoughby, of Douglas, of Bramley, of Harrington, and of the hundred and odd men uselessly sacrificed before Rooyah was great; but the loss of Adrian Hope was a cause for national sorrow. His death was mourned on the spot by every man in the camp. Loud and deep were the invectives against the obstinate stupidity which had caused it.

"No more mournful duty has fallen upon the Governor-General in the course of the present contest than that of recording the premature death of this gallant young commander"—so wrote Lord Canning when the news of the death of Adrian Hope reached him. Nor was the testimony of the Com-

mander-in-Chief less genuine. "The death of this most distinguished and gallant officer," wrote Sir Colin Campbell, "causes the deepest grief to the Commander-in-Chief."

The increasing Plague.

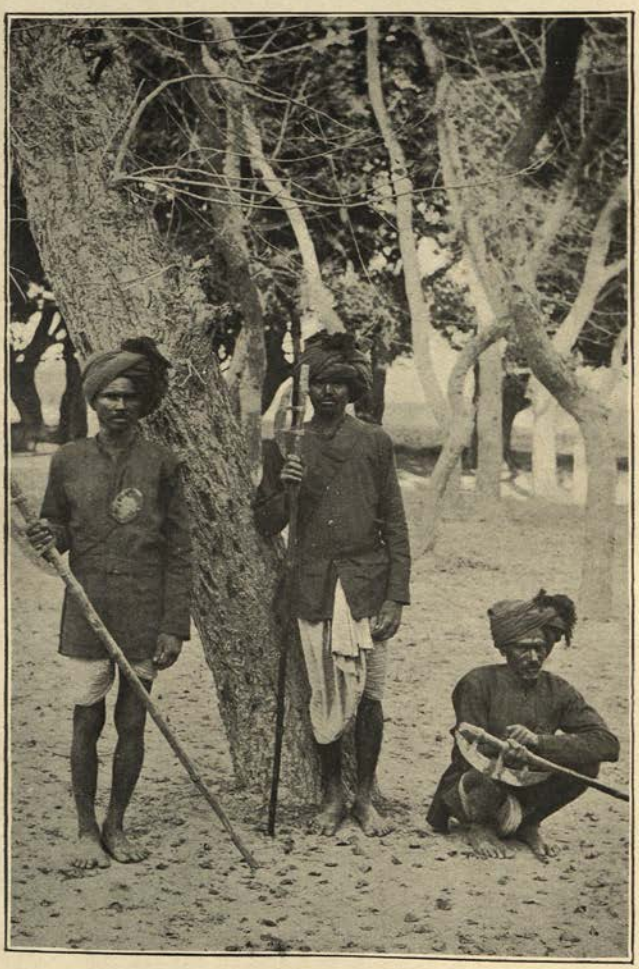
The outbreak of plague this winter has been very widespread and long-continued. It is remarkable that each succeeding outburst of this disease is of longer duration than the last. Time was when one could look forward to February for an abatement, and March for the total disappearance of the pestilence, but now May and June have replaced them. It looks as if the plague-germ, or "insect," as the native hospital assistant who came to see me to-day called it, is gradually growing acclimatized; and, perhaps, the time is not so far distant—though this is not pleasant to think of—when plague will claim its victims all the year round. It looks as though it had come

to India to stay, and when it has gathered in all the weaklings and susceptibles it will, perhaps, quietly change its character and become endemic. It must always be in the towns; but I have no doubt it could be rooted out of the villages if the people would discontinue living in clusters on dunghills, and spread themselves out a little.[1]

A village Nautch.

I was the recipient of an invitation this evening to the village *chaupal*, where a *nautch* was in progress. There were two dancing girls, buxom young females, with painted eyes and lips, and an over-familiar manner. They danced to the accompaniment of the *saringee*, played by a man seated on the stage. The performance was

[1] It is estimated that a quarter of a million Mahomedans have died of plague in one province alone, solely because they refused to evacuate infected villages on the ground that Mahomedans are forbidden to flee from the wrath of God.



VILLAGE WATCHMEN. [*To face p.* 179

not particularly edifying, still there was nothing vulgar about it, if one could but forget the character of the girls. At any rate there was no display of legs, and there were no attempts at kicking the ceiling.

Our Indian Police.

When the *nautch* was over we were treated to a play, in which the several actors acquitted themselves with much credit. A weary traveller, well on in years, finds himself benighted in a strange city, and readily accepts the hospitality of the town watchman. The latter plies his guest with strong drink, and, while he sleeps, relieves him of the gold pieces he carries on his person and all his spare clothes. The next morning, when the unfortunate traveller awakes and discovers his loss, he rushes out half-naked into the street, much to the amusement of the people, who think him mad, and lodges a complaint at the police station. The station officer

receives him kindly, and expresses much sympathy. The watchman is summoned, and, when he arrives, the station gates are closed and a mock inquiry follows; after which the police officer retires with the watchman into an adjoining room, and makes him disgorge half the loot. On their return a few minutes later the complainant is subjected to a cross-examination by the accused, and his statement is found to differ in a few minor points from that already recorded. This is the station officer's opportunity. He instantly seizes upon it, waxes very wroth, and freely abuses the old man, saying: "*You* had fifty gold mohurs? *you*, who have barely any clothing on your body! You must be mad or drunk to think so preposterous a story will be believed. Such things, my friend, cannot happen under the British Raj."

Then an eye-signal is flashed to the accused, who seizes a stick and proceeds to belabour the old man until he prays for mercy, and promises to quit the city before sunset.

The feet of clay

That our Indian police are corrupt is beyond dispute: but they are not the only sinners; nearly all native subordinates are equally bad. The police are not recruited from any particular caste or class, but in their case the opportunities are many and the temptations great.

## JUNE

"Thou hast racked him with duns and diseases
And he lies, as thy scorching winds blow,
Recollecting old England's sea breezes,
On his back in a lone bungalow;
At the slow coming darkness repining,
How he girds at the sun till it sets,
As he marks the long shadows declining
O'er the Land of Regrets."

It is difficult to write, it is difficult to now what to write about, in the month f June. A sort of stupor has fallen upon ıe land, and wherever one sees people ıey are either not moving at all, or are ıoving listlessly, languidly. It is the same ith the beasts, and the same with the ırds. During the heat of June, the hottest ...onth of the Indian year, the whole country-

A WELL. [*To face p.* 183

side presents a dismal appearance. Where but a few months back the green fields waved, and the *dal* flowers exhaled a sweet perfume, there now stretches a vast expanse of bare, sun-scorched land, which looks as though it had never produced anything but dust and disappointment.

Here and there, where the wells still hold water, Ram Bux is bravely struggling to keep alive small patches of Jerusalem artichokes and sugar-cane, and he prays devoutly each morning that the great god Indra may send of his store quickly and abundantly. The topic of village conversation just now is the coming monsoon. Ram Bux knows nothing of the Meteorological Department or of the "trades." He has little knowledge of anything outside a ten-mile radius of his village home; still, the monsoon is no mystery to him. He believes

Waiting for rain.

that the great god Indra sits aloft above the blue dome of heaven, and keeps a blue mat spread at his feet. When Indra is in a good humour he graciously unlocks his vast reservoirs, and the water, trickling through the mat in drops, descends to the earth as rain. Ram Bux may be ignorant, but he is seldom deceived by false bursts of the monsoon. He wants no telegrams from Colombo to inform him how the wind-currents are moving; he bides his time. About the fourth week of June he eagerly scans the horizon each morning, and when the clouds gather and the rain descends, he judges by the feel of the air whether it be the monsoon or merely a masquerading storm.

"The hot weather." The soil at present is as hard as adamant, and Ram Bux can make no impression on it with his soft ploughshare and starving bullocks; but immediately the first heavy

shower comes he will be out in his fields making hurried preparations for the *khárif*, or sowing, for the autumn crops. The heat now is just terrific. This is the hottest June I have experienced in these provinces these past five years. The temperature this afternoon in my tent was 107°. The sun is so powerful that I verily believe it would scorch one's hair if one were to venture out unhatted, and the ground below is quite hot enough to blister one's naked feet. My skin is so dry that it feels as though it must crack. If I shake a blanket in a dark room at night, the apartment is instantly illuminated by showers of electric sparks. The nights are very hot and stifling, and remind me of the sand wastes of Sindh. How to mitigate the heat is now the first consideration of every man, woman, and child. Those who can afford the expense

of *punkahs* pass the hot hours in their lightest garments unobserved by the vulgar eye; but it is otherwise with the poor, who must of necessity keep their doors open to catch the passing breeze. In the villages I find the women seated of a morning in the courtyards with their skirts tucked up above their knees, and their bodies bared to the waist. The heat makes them indifferent to the gaze of their own men; but "Sahib ata" ("A *sahib* is coming"), hurriedly whispered by the watchman who is piloting me through the streets, causes a stampede, and they tumble over one another in their desperate efforts to get at their clothes.

Outside the village the patient cattle meekly huddle together in the shade of the trees, and at sunset drag their old bones wearily homewards, the very picture of misery. The poor buffaloes spend the day

in a frantic but fruitless search for water, and finally reconcile themselves to the slush round the wells. In the evening, when the sun has disappeared and the screech-owls call to one another through the growing gloom, the jackal steals by, looking as if he had been dragged through a hundred thorn-bushes.

Blue pigeons.

I miss the blue pigeons in the country. They have deserted us, and have gone up to the towns. During the winter months they patronize the countryside and take apartments in the village wells; but when the harvest is over and the last of the grain-carts has left, they follow them to the market-place.

Saltpetre.

The manufacture of saltpetre is now in full swing. Fifty years ago it was a profitable pursuit, and many Europeans were employed in the business. But times have changed. All the old and once flourishing

factories have crumbled into powder; Europeans have taken to other trades; and only the mere worn-out skeleton of a once gigantic industry remains.

The relics of a great industry.

Just in the same way that alizarine won a victory over madder, and synthetic indigo has all but completely displaced the natural dye; so with saltpetre, the artificial worsted the natural product, and it has kept the market ever since. Nevertheless, so great is the vitality of the indigenous industries of this country, that in North India alone there are no less than 200,000 professional saltpetre manufacturers engaged in the preparation of this substance for the market; and just sufficient demand still obtains to enable them to carry on an occupation which is theirs by prescriptive right, which has nourished their caste people for countless generations, and which they are loath to abandon.

ISSUING SALTPETRE LICENCES. [*To face p.* 188

Saltpetre, or nitre, called, in the nomenclature of chemistry, nitrate of potassium or potassic nitrate, is composed of nitric acid and potash; but since nitric acid does not occur in a state of nature, it is not known exactly how this acid is produced. Many eminent chemists have held contrary opinions regarding the sources of the elements of this acid, and more especially as to the derivation of the nitrogen; but the theory now usually accepted ascribes the formation of the acid to the presence of certain minute organisms, or bacteria, which are said to have the power of converting the ammonia, given off during the process of decomposition of animal matter, into nitric acid. Be this as it may, the conditions necessary for the formation and development of saltpetre are a warm damp climate, and plenty of animal and vegetable refuse.

The process of manufacture.

The chief seat of the saltpetre industry of this country is in the northern provinces, where the conditions of soil and climate are most favourable to the growth of saltpetre. About 50,000 tons of crude saltpetre are made annually in these provinces, of which the greater part, after undergoing a process of partial refinement, is exported. In the United Provinces, where the supply of nitrous soil is limited, and where a great deal of it is utilized by way of a fertilizing agent in tobacco and poppy fields, it is not usual to have more than one crude saltpetre factory in each village; but further east, in the province of Behar, where soil rich in nitrates is plentiful, they are twenty times as numerous. In the northern provinces a large percentage of the works are owned by respectable Mahomedans, who employ *nunia* and *chàmar* labour to work the factories;

SALTPETRE FILTERS. [*To face p.* 191

but in Behar the manufacture of the crude article is almost entirely in the hands of the *nunias* (professional salt and saltpetre makers). A crude saltpetre factory is usually established among the dust-heaps and on the dunghills of a village, where it is difficult for any one but the *nunia*, whose olfactory nerves have become deadened to the sense of smell, to penetrate. The steamy exhalations which rise from the festering and fetid heaps in the early morning are amongst the most appalling combinations of smells that the East can furnish. The inspection of these works is a most trying ordeal, for, apart from the noisomeness of the premises, their stench lingers in one's nostrils for hours after.

The first object of the saltpetre manufacturer is the production of nitrous brine, which is thus effected. A shallow earthen

trough, measuring about 15′ × 3′ × 2′, or circular in shape, is excavated, usually out of a mound some feet above the ground; and about three inches from the bottom is laid a rough framework of twigs and straw supported on bricks, thus making a rude sort of filter, the bricks leaving a clear space below for the flow of brine. Nitrous earth, gathered from the walls and streets of the village, pulverized and dried, is packed into the upper compartment to a depth of about six inches, and the remaining space is then filled with water. After the earth has been in soak some five or six hours, the water, in the form of nitrous brine, trickles out of an aperture in the lower compartment, and is transferred to an iron boiler, where it is boiled to crystallizing point. It is then removed to earthen vats, where it remains undisturbed until the crystals have set. In the cold

SALTPETRE BOILERS. [*To face p.* 192

weather the liquor deposits its contained saltpetre within twelve hours; but in the summer crystallization is slow and occupies from five to six days. Manufacturing operations may be carried on without much fear of interruption from rain for eight months in the year, beginning with November. During the four wet months, when the work on these factories is entirely suspended, there is plenty of work to be had in the paddy and *juar* fields, so the *nunia* can always count on employment in the slack season.

The output.

The produce of these factories is bought up by refiners; redissolved in nitrous brine, and boiled down again to the point of crystallization, and allowed to set in large wooden vats. About 20,000 tons of this refined saltpetre is annually exported from the country; but it is only partially refined, and is further purified in Europe. It is

used in the manufacture of gunpowder, in medicines, for the pickling of beef, and also enters into the composition of fluxes, and is extensively employed in metallurgy.

Sulphate of soda.

During the month of June the *khari* manufacturer is also very busy. *Khari* is unpurified sulphate of soda, and is made chiefly by means of solar heat. The liquor obtained from a leaching of soil containing sulphate of soda is evaporated in the sun in large shallow pans of masonry. The works are situated in the centre of large and barren alkaline plains, where material is plentiful. A visit to these factories in summer is an experience one cannot soon forget. The country for miles all round is a wide white sheet of sodic efflorescence, and the heat and glare are beyond all description.

Cruelty to animals.

Donkeys are employed at the works to fetch and carry soil, and the fate of these

wretched animals is ghastly in the extreme. No trouble is taken by the owners to import food for them, and nothing is found growing on these wide stretches of plain. After a hard day's work in blinding dust and scorching heat, the poor beast is hobbled and turned out to graze; but what shall he eat? Hungry and thirsty, abused and beaten, he yet goes on submissively with his work from day to day, till his thin scissor legs will carry him no longer; then he lies down patiently in the dust, meekly takes his last thrashing, and quickly becomes food for the jackals and vultures. A donkey costs but eight rupees, say ten shillings, and more than half the number that are taken to the works in April never return. There is no one more cruel to dumb animals than the native of India. The mild Hindu who shudders at the taking of life is a paradox, if indeed he is not a

sham. He will spare the parasites which infest his body; yet he will ride his pony with bleeding galls upon its back; he will overload the poor little donkey till he can barely crawl, and will twist the tails of his long-suffering cattle until he twists them off. His character is a peculiar mixture of kindness and cruelty, of honesty and dishonesty, of courage and cowardice, of morality and immorality; and if his rulers are unable to quite understand him the fault is not all theirs.

A sand-storm.

The bearer came in this afternoon (June 16), about three o'clock, to announce that a *kala andi* (black storm) was approaching. Stepping outside, I found that the man's statement was not far from the truth; for a great dust-cloud, very nearly black in colour and extending across half the horizon, was advancing from the west. People were

flying in all directions seeking shelter, and the village herds went by at a trot with the boys behind them, shouting, "Andi ata; bhago" ("A storm is coming; fly"). The little birds hurried into the bamboo clumps and bushes for protection, while those of stronger pinions soared up into the heavens to get above the influence of the storm. We had barely time to put the camp in order when it broke upon us with the roar and thunder of charging cavalry. Instantly the sun went out, and the whole country was plunged in midnight gloom. The velocity of the wind, the mad rush of the leaves, the flying dust, the noise and bang of the wreckage, and the deep boom of the thunder defy all description. For the space of fully half-an-hour the wind howled and screamed all round us, tearing viciously at my tent, wrenching great branches off the trees, and bringing

the raw mangoes down in showers; but the men hung on to the ropes right manfully, and so the tent was saved from being levelled to the ground. I had not the nerve to stay inside, as the trees were falling all round us, so I took my stand in the verandah, prepared to dodge if a tree should fall my way. Following hard upon the dust came a bellowing rainstorm; and, gods! how it rained. It came down just as though a mighty reservoir had suddenly burst above us; and though the rain did not last for more than ten minutes, the whole grove was flooded, and we were all standing ankle-deep in water. Then the sun blazed out once again, and we set to work to put the camp to rights. We found the old cook mixed up with the kitchen utensils and the crockery, buried under the tent, making desperate efforts to extricate himself. Half the crockery was lying in

fragments, but I could not suppress my laughter when I saw the old man emerge from the ruins, snorting and blowing like a whale.

Plates and dishes, cooking utensils, drinking vessels, uniforms, clothes, bedding, boots and shoes were scattered all over the grove, and it took the men all the evening to find their things. When I was able to get a bath I half forgot our recent troubles; and when the night came down upon us tenderly and beautifully cool, I knew no other feeling than one of gratitude.

The silence of Content.

Our rustic friends have simple tastes and take life as they find it. They are often as phlegmatic in their pleasures as in their duties. A few nights ago I chanced to pass through a village bazaar, on my way from the railway station to the camp. As we entered the bazaar the police gong struck

the hour. It was one o'clock. The people were asleep, some on beds, some on the ground, all over the road, regardless of the traffic and the convenience of travellers. Coming along I caught the soft strains of a *saringee*, and heard a woman lift up her voice in song. Presently we came upon the party of revellers. There was a faint moon. A dancing girl, somewhat lightly clad, stood on a carpet spread in the centre of the road, and while she danced to the beat of her bells she sang a love song in melting tones to the accompaniment of the *saringee*. The audience, some sixteen or twenty men, lay stretched in the dust, like the spokes of a wheel, all round the fair singer, with their chins resting on the palms of their hands. They were all very silent, and there was nothing to indicate that they were deriving any enjoyment; yet they must have been

happy or they would not have been there at that hour; perhaps they were too happy to speak.

The end of the tour.

And now my tour is over. To-day is June 30, and I am camped ten miles from headquarters; to-morrow we march in, and in a few days the monsoon will burst. Then my wife and Sonny Baba, who have been up at Simla for two months, will leave the hills and come to join me—their exile—in the plains.

## JULY

"Now fade the fires of summer,
The loaded west winds blow."

The magic Monsoon.

HERE comes the rain. Hurrah!

Away with the roof and let the steaming floors be cooled, or, better still, let us go out into the garden and throw our hats up to welcome the rain.

Of all transformation scenes, that afforded by India in the month of July is the most marvellous. A few short weeks ago there was not a blade of grass visible except along canal banks and watercourses; the trees were so heavily coated with dust that they looked as though they were fashioned from clay, and the sky blazed like polished brass

through a dust-charged atmosphere. But now the magic wand of Jupiter Pluvius has passed over the land. The whole country is spread with the softest and brightest of green carpets; the trees have been thoroughly washed; every particle of dust has gone from the air; and above us is the bluest of blue skies, patterned with masses of heavy dark clouds. Surely, 'tis a new country, this India in July! The air is damp and cool, and the landscape refreshingly green. The birds have shaken off their sleepy summer languor and are once again full of mirth and song.

> "For joy the birds with boulden throats
> Against the vision sheen,
> Take up their kindly music notes
> In woods and gardens green."

The charm of July.

One of the prettiest months of the year is July, the first month of the rains. It is also

the coolest and pleasantest of the six summer months. We have had delightful weather since the rains began, and have had to use light blankets in the early hours. The monsoon was a little later than usual this year, the first rain falling on the 10th of the month.

A false start.

On the morning of the 21st of June we woke to find the eastern sky dark with rain-clouds, and a strong easterly wind prevailing. The air was damp, the clouds low, and the wind high, so we concluded the monsoon was upon us and hurried over the march to a bungalow for shelter. The clouds advanced with surprising speed, and in a very short time the whole heavens were overcast. Then the rain came down in torrents, and for four-and-twenty hours a violent *jhupsie* blew, and we registered five inches of rain. But it was not the monsoon after all, for the

skies then cleared and the sun blazed forth once again. The next day we marched twelve miles to the music of the frogs, who had come out in thousands and lined the borrow-pits on both sides of the road. The next day, and for many days after, the sky remained clear, and the song of the frogs gradually retreated to the deeper ponds and pools, and finally died away altogether. Like us, they, too, had been the victims of a base meteorological hoax, for there still remained three weeks of hot weather to be got through; and we had no alternative but to wait in patience.

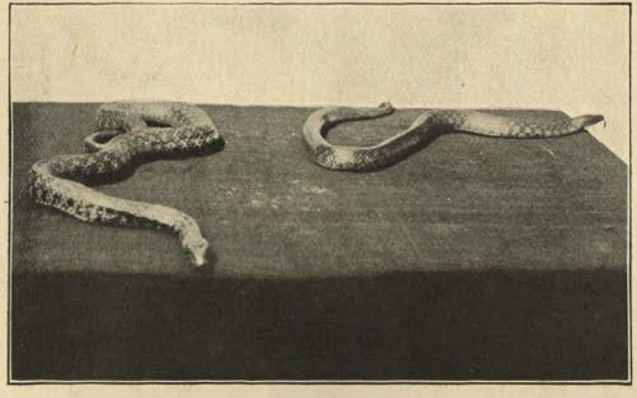
"'Twas hard; but patience robs of half their weight
The ills we may not mend."

One man's meat.

Ram Bux, on the other hand, was intensely delighted. Sufficient rain had fallen to soften the hard ground, and the spell of clear weather enabled him to sow his seed.

As soon as the fields were dry enough to permit of ploughing operations, he drove out his unwilling team, and his wife followed patiently in the track of the plough and dropped the seed into the furrow. The sowing is now over, and the *khárif* (autumn crop) is already several inches high. The crop in this part of the country comprises *juar*, *bajra*, cotton, Indian corn, and two varieties of *dal*, *arhar* and *moong*. Rice is sown sparsely in parts of this district in marshy places; but I have not seen any, as I came in before the sowing had begun. The people expect a good monsoon, as there was rain on the 22nd of June at the time of the *Dasera* festival.

Frogs. The frogs have come out from their hiding-places once again, and the whole country resounds with their hideous clamour. The most noisy and persistent of our Batra-



DHAMAN SNAKES. [*To face p.* 207

chian friends is a large green brute who utters a sound resembling the hoarse bleating of an asthmatic sheep. His coat is the colour of monsoon grass, and he is so adept a ventriloquist that it is almost impossible to locate him on the pond bank. The young frogs of the season, the tadpoles of last spring, are now leaving the breeding grounds in countless thousands. The river sands and marsh banks are crowded with them of an evening, when they emerge from the water for exercise and food. If you happen to stray into their haunts you must beware of the snakes, for they, too, have come out in large numbers and are preying upon the little froggies. A few evenings ago I surprised a six-foot *dhaman* snake, lying in wait for his prey in the shingle on the river bank.

This reminds me of an occurrence of last An incident.

evening. About eight o'clock, while my wife and I were seated in the verandah, there came a series of most dreadful screams from the neighbourhood of the garden cistern. At first I thought Tim, the terrier, had seized another hare; but Tim was inside the house and came hurrying out in great excitement, followed by the bearer carrying a stick and lantern.

"A snake, sahib," he cried. "*It* has caught a frog."

We rushed to the cistern, but the snake, hearing us approach, dropped its prey and vanished into the surrounding bushes. Poor little Froggie was paralyzed with fright and breathing heavily. We took him back with us to the house, and placed him in the bath-room; but this morning, when we went to see how our little friend was doing, we found him dead.

Guinea-fowl.

While on the subject of frogs, I must not forget the guinea-fowl. Our next-door neighbours keep a very large number of these birds. I do not think they can have less than two hundred and fifty. As we do not keep up the garden, we have no objection to the guinea-fowl trespassing. This morning they assembled in great force and raided our premises. When they had passed through we happened to walk out into the garden, and there we found the grass strewn with numberless disembowelled frogs marking the track of the invaders. Most of the frogs were dead, but some still lived, and it was pitiful to see them endeavouring to hop out of the way. I cannot say what part of the frog's anatomy the guinea-fowl favours; but from the wholesale slaughter we witnessed it would appear that in the matter of frog diet the pintado has no scruples, and will

kill a dozen of these helpless amphibians for a mere mouthful.

Too much generosity.

India has a wonderfully generous climate. No one who has not spent a rainy season on the plains can have any conception of the number and variety of insects that inhabit the soil. As soon as the first heavy shower falls the earth brings forth a marvellous crop of all manner of creeping and crawling horrors, from cobra-de-capello of the beautiful sheen, to the harmless though most offensive little *gundi*. The frogs, who have invaded the bathrooms through the drain hole, prowl through the house at night when the lights are brought and eat up the half-roasted insects as they fall from the lamps. In my dressing-room a family of great black scorpions have taken up their residence, without leave or licence, and they evince a partiality for my slippers. I have

succeeded in disposing of three youthful members of the family, but I do not know how many more there may be; and the parents of this precious brood are still at large. We are compelled to share the bedroom with cold, slimy snakes and horrid-looking tarantulas; and when we fly for refuge to the verandah the floor there is found to be crawling with enormous black ants, who are quite prepared to dispute our rights. When dinner is announced a thousand and one unbidden and unwelcome guests come flocking into the room, and throughout the meal a battle rages between our servants on the one side and the allied forces of the insects on the other. These creatures have an uncontrollable predilection for strong waters. During the meal they make desperate efforts to get a sip of the whisky, and throw themselves bodily into

the bubbling tumbler, and then look to me to help them out. Though I am not a tee-totaler myself, I am a strong advocate for temperance in insects.

Insect life. The life of these frail beings is a short one, but who can say that it is not happy? They are fire worshippers, and the lamp leads them to Nirvana. My writing-table at night presents a weird scene, and furnishes a wide field for the study of entomology. I have not had the curiosity nor the patience to classify them; but I have no doubt that a hundred varieties might be found on my table after dinner.

The gundi. The *gundi* (in the vernacular the word signifies putrid) is a small black beetle with an overpowering buggy smell. When the rains are well established the *gundis* come in thousands; but these provinces are not nearly as much afflicted as Behar and

Bengal. I can recall an occasion in Behar when evening service in the church had to be abandoned, as the *gundis* were in possession of the building. The pews and floor were strewn thick with them, and they were still pouring in through the open windows. It was impossible to worship in such company.

An eccentric person.

Talking of *gundis* reminds me of a gentleman of most singular taste. So great was his liking for the scent of these insects that he was not satisfied with having them about his person at night only; but must needs carry them about in his pocket-handkerchief during the day-time. He took them with him to his office and to the club, and used them just as a lady might use lavender or white rose.

An Indian village at close quarters.

Like many things Indian, an Indian village is seen to greatest advantage from a distance. At some seasons of the year,

more especially during the monsoon, when the ponds are patterned with pleasing reflections, when the trees are in full leaf, and the country is wrapped in a mantle of green, an Indian village may even be said to be picturesque; but it can never be inviting. Its outward aspect may change with the seasons; but its internal state is ever the same — unspeakably foul. A cluster of mud huts built promiscuously on a mound, intersected by narrow and filthy lanes, and interspersed with a few shade-giving trees—such is Ram Bux's home. A village may be seen from a long way off, as it rises well above the surrounding country. The mound on which it stands is nothing but the accumulated débris of the huts and houses of the past; and is yearly added to as the houses collapse and new ones are built upon the ruins with fresh

AN INDIAN VILLAGE. [*To face p.* 214

earth from the village pond. The hoariest village is, therefore, that which is highest perched. There are never any wide streets in Ram Bux's village, merely dark and tortuous lanes wherein the services of a pilot are indispensable. If you must visit a rural habitation it is advisable to go mounted, for the accumulation of filth through which you must pass is just appalling. The people have not even the most rudimentary ideas of sanitation ; and—I do not wish to write unkindly—what is still worse, they have lost even the instinct of the lower animals in the matter of cleanliness. A bird will not foul its own nest nor a beast of the field its lair; but Ram Bux has no such guiding instinct. Every morning each housewife will carefully deposit her quota of slops and sweepings in the street, where the filth lies and festers

through nine long months of the year. If it were not for the kindly intervention of summer, when the dirt frizzles up and becomes almost innocuous; and the merciful monsoon which scours the dirt-choked lanes with streams of rushing water, Ram Bux would find it difficult to live in his foul den, and survive.

Spurious cleanliness of the Hindu.

I am afraid there is a good deal of spurious cleanliness about the mild Hindu. He spends many hours daily in plastering his *chouka* (the spot whereon he cooks his food), and in polishing up his brass plates; but the dirt lies in festering heaps round his dwelling, and he does not trouble to remove it. And if Ram Bux is bad enough, his Musulman brother is still worse. Poverty has often been put forward as an excuse for the terribly foul state of an Indian village; but poverty is not the cause, for in India there

is a special caste of human scavengers, and in almost every village there are members of this caste in residence. For a very trifling consideration, or for merely a return in food, these people would willingly undertake to keep the premises clean; but in matters of sanitation and cleanliness there is no cohesion, no initiative, no public spirit among the rural population; each man does as he likes, and his neighbour does likewise.

The village dog.

In India, where there is no dog legislation and no dog-tax, the country is over-run with a multitude of dogs. No matter at what hour of the day you may visit a village, the first to greet you will be a dog—a great, black-snouted, ring-tailed, evil-looking pariah. On a cold morning in winter, when the mist is hanging low, you will find him curled up on the ash-heaps—his hair erect from the cold and his body covered with silvery beads

of dew—looking the picture of misery. On such occasions your greeting, as might be expected, will be frigidly cold, and he will chance the cut of a cane rather than forsake the warm hollow in which he has passed the night; but when the sun overtops the mist and infuses warmth into his body he is quite a different creature. Insolence and aggressiveness are the main traits in his character now; but, be it said to his credit, these are not quite natural to him, for a pariah dog properly brought up and kindly treated makes a most faithful and amiable companion. The life of the village dog is a long series of cuffs and kicks, and it is not surprising, therefore, that you find him so ill-mannered and wild. Immediately he sees you he will give the signal, and in a very short time you will find yourself surrounded by the whole canine population

of the place. Doors open and men look out to ascertain the cause of the disturbance; veiled faces peep furtively from over the courtyard wall to catch a fleeting glimpse of the stranger, but no one volunteers to assist you. These dogs are no man's property; they belong to the streets, and they go through life without one single kind word from the people among whom they live. Twice a day, when the air is filled with the savour of cooking food, they go begging from door to door; and, by way of liquid refreshment, greedily lick up the kitchen water thrown out by the women. Between times they nose round, picking up trifles from the garbage-heaps and savoury tit-bits from the *chamars'* quarter in the shape of hide-parings. Occasionally a diseased carcass is thrown out into the fields, and immediately a fierce fight ensues between

the dogs and the birds for its possession. At nightfall they dig into the ash-heaps or steal into the fodder stores, where they somehow contrive to keep themselves warm. With the advent of summer their difficulties increase. Driven to the point of frenzy by the excruciating torture of mange, combined with the blistering heat and the pangs of hunger, they split up into packs, and, like ravening wolves, pull down and quickly devour the worn-out donkeys and ponies grazing in the fields. When even this food is denied them they burrow into the graves, and fight, each the other, for possession of the human remains lying about the cremation-ground. A diet of old shoes and dead Hindus, combined with the scorching heat and the intense agony of mange, soon develop rabies, and Ram Bux has to pay

the penalty in the shape of a long list of hydrophobic cases.

We have had no rain for two or three days, but the sky is once again overcast. There, I hear the drops falling. Rain.

> "The hooded clouds, like friars,
> Tell their beads in drops of rain."

I hope we may have a downpour, for the weather is becoming unpleasantly hot.

## AUGUST

Rain in excess.

IT is raining in torrents. This is the third day of heavy and continuous rain, and we all feel that we have had about as much as we can bear without a serious loss of temper. I hear a plaintive little voice (it is Sonny Baba's) in the verandah, crying—

"Rain, rain, go to Spain;
Never show your face again."

And then slowly, with a pause after each word, as if there was a doubt whether the rain understood—

"Rain—rain—go—to—Spain;
Never—show—your—face—again."

But the charm has failed once more, and the

OUR BUNGALOW.

[*To face p.* 223

pathetic little voice retires indoors, disappointed.

An Indian bungalow.

All through July we had very heavy rain, and we are now longing for a little sunshine to dry the roof and floors of the house. The coping of the garden wall is enshrouded with brilliantly green moss; while the flat mud roofs of the servants' quarters are hidden in grass and sprinkled over with mushrooms. The house at present occupied by us was built before the Mutiny, and the timber in the roof has not been renewed once since then; but this we have only just discovered. It was the only house available when we arrived here, so it was a case of Hobson's choice. The bungalows in these small Indian stations are all whitewash and sham. The ravages of the white ants had been skilfully concealed under a thick coating of plaster and lime; but the monsoon has coaxed out

the termites again, and the roof has the appearance of being infected with leprosy. The question of house accommodation for Government servants in small stations has not yet been seriously faced by Government, and, as a result of this policy of *laissez faire*, we live in extreme discomfort, in rotten houses, owned by parsimonious native landlords, on whom no legal pressure can be brought to bear.

A transformation.

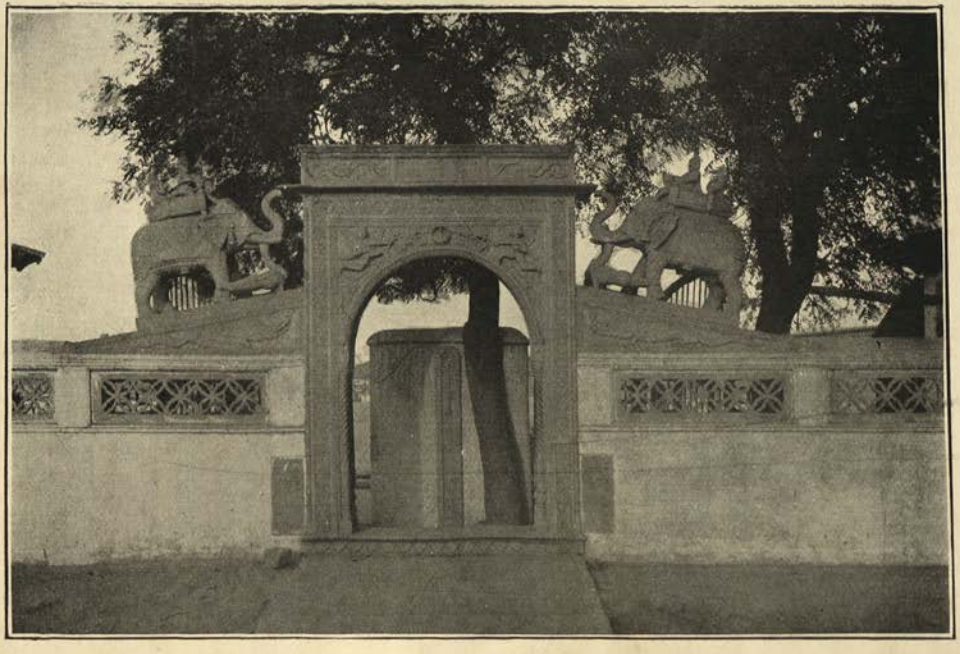
When we moved into this house on the 1st of April the compound was dry and dusty; and there was nothing, except the ruins of a cistern and a summer-house, to show that a garden had ever existed. There were a few shrubs and bushes scattered about the grounds, but these were leafless and indistinguishable. There was no grass, not a blade; but the brown nakedness of the earth was hidden under a covering of dead *nîm* leaves and

decayed *nîm* berries. Now all is changed. The rain-water has swept away the leaves, and the whole compound is a foot deep in grass. The cactus and aloe hedges on the north and south of the house are in full bloom, and a group of custard-apple trees near the river bank is wrapped in beautiful foliage. In the old garden the ruins of the well and summer-house, which presented so dismal an appearance in early July, now look quite picturesque, swathed in creepers which are already in flower. In the centre of the garden is a circular masonry platform, where it is a pleasure now to sit out after dinner when the rain permits; for a band of beautiful white lilies encircles the platform, and the flowering jasmine distils a delicate perfume.

The river.

At the back of the house we have a fine view of the river Ganges; or Mother Ganges, as the Hindus affectionately call her. The cliffs

behind the bungalow are some thirty feet high, and thickly wooded to the very edge of the water. Save for a small island, which is still showing above the water, the stream of the river is more than a mile wide; but the villages and gilded temple spires on the further bank are clearly visible. Occasionally we spend an evening on the cliffs watching the sailing-boats go by, and the plucky little *gwala* boys, mounted on buffaloes, swimming back with their herds from the island, with shouts and snatches of song. Last week the cruel Mother took her toll. One of these little fellows fell off his mount in mid-stream, and was quickly swept away in the swirling current and drowned; but this accident has not deterred the brave Ahír spirit, and twice daily the boys swim their cattle across the rushing waters to and from the grazing-grounds on the island.



A TEMPLE GATE. [*To face p.* 227

The madman at the ferry.

About a mile from here, up-stream, is the Bargatchia ferry. The road leading down to the water winds through a picturesque ravine, lined on both sides with shops and *ekka* stands, and thickly shaded by immense *bargat* trees—hence the name of the ferry. The densely wooded cliffs on either hand are occupied by temples adorned with the figures of *hanumans*, or monkeys, wrought in stone, and a hundred pinnacles of gold. One morning, as I was riding down to the ferry to arrange for a boat to take us over to the island, I felt my left elbow seized; and, turning round, I found myself looking into the eyes of a grinning lunatic. He was a man of more than average physique; but quite harmless, and inclined to be friendly. In lieu of clothes he had his body liberally smeared over with mud and ashes, and in addition to his mental affliction he was dumb.

A four-anna bit seemed to bring a momentary gleam of sanity into his eyes, and he scampered off to the booth of a corn-roaster, where roasted corn-cobs were on sale.

Flowers for the Goddess.

While at the ferry I noticed a string of natives coming down the road, carrying small baskets in their hands. On reaching the bank they flung the contents of the baskets into the river, and instantly the water seemed to shoot forth a million flowers of every hue. Then a great cry went up from the spectators on the bank:—"Gangajee ki jai!" ("Victory to Mother Ganges!")—and the flowers floated out with the breeze and were carried down with the current.

The country in July.

Ram Bux is busy now weeding his *juar* fields. The maize sown in June on irrigated lands is now in ear, and the cobs are in the market. The people appear to be very fond

of roasted or pop corn. I stood for a few minutes near a *bharbhoonja's*, or corn-roaster's, shop in the bazaar a few days ago, and found him and his wife doing a roaring trade. A crowd of impatient customers stood round the door, and everybody in the vicinity was munching roasted cob-heads. The autumn crop is doing well: but a break in the rains would be beneficial;' and Ram Bux would like a little sunshine to dry the rain-drenched walls of his hut, which are on the verge of collapse. The villages and homesteads in the country are looking very pretty now, hung with trailing creepers and surrounded by green fields and overflowing pools, wherein the beautiful flowers and broad shining leaves of the lotus, sparkling with raindrops, float dreamily upon the surface of the water.

The happiness of Ram Bux.

Ram Bux is undoubtedly poor; but I think

he is happy on the whole in his sleepy way. He is the ideal of the poet in his "Ode on Solitude"—

> "Happy the man whose wish and care,
> A few paternal acres bound;
> Content to breathe his native air,
> In his own ground.
>
> "Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
> Whose flocks supply him with attire,
> Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
> In winter, fire."

His wants are few, and he is easily satisfied, and generally takes life with a smile. All things considered, he might with some accuracy be described as the most simple-minded, most law-abiding, and most unexacting person in all the world. I do not think he cares one farthing who the rulers of the country are, so long as he gets security and peace; and his loyalty is neither here nor there. So long as fortune smiles he will be with you; but when the fates frown, policy may take him over to

His loyalty.

the other side. But if you desire to be his friend there is one thing you must always remember: never to interfere with (1) his religion, (2) his women. In spite of all that the detractors of our Government may say, there is no doubt that India's rural population are well disposed towards us, and that we have done our duty by them; but our good intentions are often neutralized, not to say frustrated, by the dishonesty and venality of our native subordinates. Ram Bux knows this, else he would not have such implicit faith in an Englishman's word and integrity. In India disaffection is confined to the educated classes; disappointed hopes and blighted aspirations being the principal cause. But this is a large question.

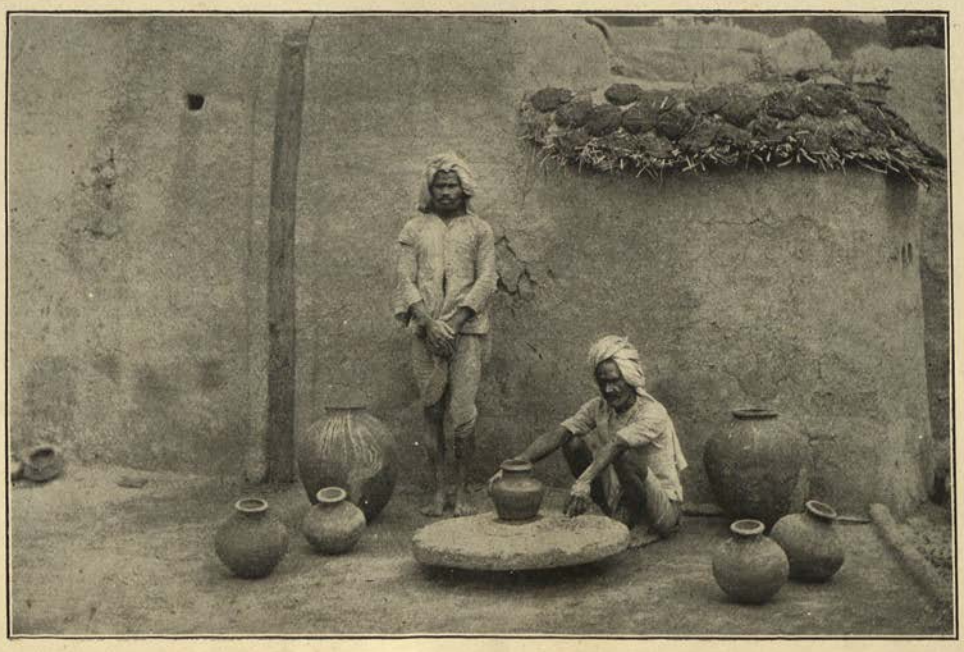
His ills.

In the city, plague has already appeared, and an exodus of the people has begun. Cholera also claims its victims daily, and

fever and bowel complaints steadily exact a heavy toll. August and September are the two most unhealthy months of the year: but the mortality is heaviest among the poor, who live in dark, damp hovels and are driven by heat and mosquitoes to sleep out on the wet roadway in the moist night air. Many huts and houses have collapsed under the pressure of heavy rain, and the occupants are living in slush and water. During the moist heat of the rainy months, fruits and vegetables decompose very rapidly, and this is an additional source of illness in the homes of the poor.

A new chum.

The other day, taking advantage of a slight break in the rains, a friend and I went out coursing together. My companion was a young man and a late arrival from home—the last man on the officers' list of the Police Department. He is very keen, and takes a deep interest in everything, from the angli-



THE POTTER.

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cized station-master to the naked potter and his spinning-wheel. He is not idly curious, but anxious to learn, and always has questions to ask. He was in the habit of calling his bearer *Hazoor* (Honoured sir; Presence), under the impression that the word signified "Hullo, there!" and when I pointed out the mistake, he laughed so heartily that the old rheumatic camp-chair on which he was seated creaked ominously in all its joints.

He came out to the country well equipped in the matter of home accomplishments, but soon found that sterner demands are made of men out here. He is distinctly above the average at tennis; a very fair cricketer; first-class at rackets; a good swimmer, and a tower of strength at football; but this is the sum total of his accomplishments. He is now learning to ride and to shoot, and has sent for some hog-spears. He devotes

his spare moments at office to the study of Hayes, and has bought a very nice country-bred mare; but she is too nervous and excitable for polo, albeit he purchased her from a man who advertised her as a good polo pony; and until he can afford to buy another, he spends his spare evenings in practice on the wooden horse, while his orderlies and the *khansama's* boys throw him the balls. Being desirous of trying his mare across-country, he suggested that we might go out together, and so we did. We left early in the morning so as to be back before the sun grew hot. At daybreak a jack, scenting danger, left his hiding-place in a clump of tamarisk and made off for some sugar-cane fields in the distance as fast as ever he could travel. I had the hounds unleashed, and there followed a mad ride across the ravines. Jack was going strong,

but his cover was a long way off, and we hoped to reach him before he gained it. At the last ravine my companion's mare got quite out of hand, and in taking the jump alighted on one of my hounds. This necessitated my dismounting, but I called out to him to go on, and they seized Jack just on the border of the field, where a man was engaged in peeling grass. When I arrived on the scene I witnessed one of the funniest spectacles surely ever afforded by the hunting field. My friend was still mounted, the mare was covered with foam and was dancing in circles and blowing like a steam-engine; but her rider dared not leave the saddle, as there was no one to help him on again—Chidda, his *syce*, having remained behind at the bungalow. His face was very red, and in a very angry voice he was shouting—"*Dum nikalo! dum nikalo!*" (literally, *dum*,

life; *nikalo*, take out). The dogs were round in a circle, the carcass was lying in the centre, and a stalwart son of Ram—the same individual who five minutes before was peacefully peeling grass—was now engaged in a fierce onslaught on the remains of poor Jack. He had already reduced the body to a pulp, but the more he bashed the angrier became my friend, and the louder came the order, "*Dum nikalo!*" By the time I arrived my friend had worked himself up into a white heat, and his language ran scarlet. Exactly what he said I cannot remember, nor would I repeat it if I did; but mingled with the turbid stream of his wrath there came most unchristian remarks about the intelligence of the native in general and of the man before us in particular.

"For the last ten minutes," he exclaimed, "I have been telling this man that I want

the brush, and have even thrown him my knife, but he will not understand. He has beaten the wretched thing out of all shape and recognition."

"May I know what you said?" I asked.

"*Dum nikalo*, of course. What more is a man to say?"

"Then I don't see that you have any reason to grumble," I replied. "He has done your bidding to the letter. There is not much *dum* left in that animal. Next time try *dúm* (tail)."

As we rode home from the kill I heard him repeating his lesson like a school-boy, "*Dum, dúm;*" then, from a love of alliteration, he added a common English expletive and laughed.

Alone with Nature.

I am writing these notes on the cliffs by the river, where all is peace and quietness. The rain ceased about midday, and we have

had a beautiful evening. After all the charm appears to have told. It is an ineffable pleasure to break away sometimes from one's own kind and to spend a few hours alone, absolutely alone, with Nature. Life in these small stations is dreadfully monotonous and telling on the nerves, and it is a relief to get away for even one evening in the week from the incessant whir-r-r of the billiard balls, the hiss of the soda-water, and the harsh "*Quai-hais*" of the thirst-afflicted. Out here on the river bank, peace and harmony pervade the scene, and nothing jars. The crocodiles have quietly slipped out of the river and are lazing it on the sands of the island. A black-and-white striped kingfisher comes skimming along the water with a "tweek, tweek," looking for his supper, and the mews sail by with a flight as soft and as noiseless as the passage through the air

of a feather. The spire of Mahadeo's temple on the farther bank, which shows up many feet above the surrounding trees, has caught the last rays of the setting sun, and is gleaming like gold. A fleet of sailing-boats is passing up the farther stream like a mist upon the waters, while Neesha silently spreads her dark veil over river and land.

"Slowly she wanders up the river sands,
Faint on her brow the flush of lapsing day,
She comes with silence from the twilight lands,
And smiles to think the dawn so far away.

"Day's fragrance lingers round her. In her hair
Are tiny lilies trembling lest they die;
And Sleep, her child, is near, who has in care
The weariness of worlds."

## SEPTEMBER

Sickness in September.

OF all the months of the year, September has the most evil reputation for sickness, and September deserves it. All through July and August our servants kept free from fever; but lately they have been falling out one by one, until now more than half are absent. In the city every second man has had, or is having, fever; and asthma, too, is very prevalent. On the occasion of the marriage of his daughter a few days ago, our old *syce* treated his friends to a *burra khana* (feast). At eleven o'clock at night the party sat down to a feed of *pillao* and other rich dishes, and the consequence was

that the old *syce* woke up in the small hours of the morning in a fit of asthma. Later he was carried in from his house in a doolie and begged for a letter to the doctor *sahib.* He was breathing with great difficulty, and appeared *in extremis;* but the following day, thanks to the treatment he had received in hospital, he was nearly quite well.

Faith in one's own kin.

But do you think he would have gone to hospital without that letter? Had you paid him for it he would not have done so, so little faith have these people in the native staff. Last winter one of the native clerks in our camp caught a chill, and paralysis supervened. I took him myself to the Government hospital and asked the native assistant surgeon to be specially kind and attentive to him, as he was an old man and all alone. The assistant surgeon promised to do all he could for him, and hoped to send

me a favourable report very soon; and I feel quite certain that he did do his best; but a few days later came a most harrowing letter from the clerk, complaining that he was being grossly neglected because he was a poor man and unable to pay fees. He complained that the medicine they were giving him to drink was merely sugar and water, and the liniment a mixture of water and camphor, and he besought me to write to the European doctor in charge of the district or he would most certainly die!

The Monsoon. The monsoon this year began on the 10th of July. There were no cloudy days to herald its approach. It ceased on Sunday, the 28th of August, as suddenly as it began, and for ten days thereafter we enjoyed a fleckless sky and a cool breeze from the west. During the time the monsoon lasted we had rain every day, and some very heavy falls;

and we hoped when the 28th of August dawned, clear and cloudless, that we had seen the last of it. In our lay opinion sufficient rain had fallen to ensure a bumper harvest; but when, a few days later, I chanced to visit the countryside, I found Ram Bux, much to my surprise, anxiously scanning the heavens, for the late-sown maize had begun to droop and yellow. Here and there, where the stunted crop gave no promise, the sickle was being busily applied to make room for the early spring sowings. On the morning of the 7th instant the eastern sky was of an indigo hue, and by breakfast-time the rain was hissing through the trees and tumbling off the roof in cascades. It rained heavily for about three hours, and not less than two inches can have fallen. Since then there have been several very heavy showers, and a good autumn

harvest is now ensured. Ram Bux is now engaged on the fallows, preparing them for the *rabi* seed.

The hand of God.

From the western provinces dismal reports reach us of impending famine and a starving population. The hand of God indeed lies heavily on that miserable country, for hardly are they out of one famine when they are plunged into another, and the more fortunate provinces are over-run by hordes of their homeless wanderers. Here in our neighbourhood are several camps of these unfortunate people. During the dry weather they wander about ceaselessly from place to place, but so soon as the rains break and render movement impossible, they converge on the larger towns and cities and settle down for three months in little grass huts in the vicinity. From here they issue out every morning to earn a few annas on the

roads and in the brickfields. A few mornings ago I visited one of their encampments. The men are sturdy-looking fellows, somewhat rough of speech, but with a pleasant boldness of countenance. The women, though tall and muscular, have careworn faces, testifying to the hardships that have so suddenly overtaken them; but the children are weak and sickly looking, and seem to be drooping under the burden of the new life. I looked all round the camp, but there were no old people visible, and was it surprising considering the circumstances? These people are not *banjaras;* they were quiet, homely cultivators not long ago, and were driven from their homes in far-off Rajputana by dire stress of famine.

Nomads.

In the neighbourhood of the city there are other camps also, the camps of the *kanjars.* Their huts are the smallest and frailest

imaginable, and it is surprising how these people are able to survive a rainy season. That they not only survive but flourish is evidenced by the swarms of children in the camp. These infants are kept quite naked up to the age of six or seven; and it is undoubtedly due to the severity of their upbringing that they are fitted for a future life of constant toil and turmoil.

The falling river.

The river has fallen several feet, and the sandbanks are gleaming white above the muddy waters, while the island is fast regaining its former proportions. Pampas grass in flower now covers it, and on a moonlight night gives it the appearance of being snow-clad. The *gwala* boys no longer swim their herds across the stream, for the grass has invaded the island pastures, which now abound in pig and jackal.

Jackals.

When the sun sets, and night, sombre

yet glorious, comes stealing over the waters, the jackals in the grass rise from their lairs and the welkin rings with the familiar howl—"Here's a dead Hindoo—oo—oo! Where? where? where? Here! here! here!" So long as they remain on the island we have no objection to offer, for the distance tempers the hideousness of their howls, which reach us mingled with the soughing of the wind through the tamarisks on the bank, and the noise of the flowing river; but when, without any apparent cause they suddenly give tongue at dead of night from every nook and corner of the compound, and even from the very verandahs of the house, we heartily wish them all at the bottom of Ganjagee. Sonny Baba is more used to them now, but he still requires his mother's reassurances when he wakes. "Mummy, jathals," cries a frightened little

voice from the cradle, when the fiendish howls from the verandahs startle him in his sleep. "Never mind, my boy," replies his mummy. "If they come inside, Daddy will shoot them." Reassured by this reference to his daddy's prowess, he falls asleep again, and in the morning when he wakes he retains but a hazy recollection of the night's disturbances.

A Homeric combat.

A few nights back a fierce fight took place among some of the jackals in the compound. It lasted, off and on, throughout the night. Now the fight raged near the river bank, now in the garden, again on the north of the house, then in the verandah, next near the kitchen, back again at the river, and so on. When day broke the combatants hastily retreated to the island, leaving a Hindu's skull in the verandah as a memento of the night's struggle.

Not more than half-a-mile from our bungalow is the village of Nipania. Riding through it this evening, we were surprised to find that a temple, which was all but completed six months ago, was still unfinished. I might have passed by without further thought; but the man who was building it was a friend of mine, and not so long ago I had stood with him in the shadow of this temple while he pointed proudly to it, and said he hoped to complete it before the rains set in. I was, therefore, curious to learn why my friend had stayed his hand. On inquiring after him from a passer-by I was informed that he had fallen a victim to the plague, that work on the temple had been discontinued from the day of his death, and that the building would not now be completed. His son, it appears, has taken his father's death as a bad omen, and will not proceed with the work.

The shadow of Death.

The anger of the water nymphs.

Some years ago I was camped at a village on the river Indus, where I found many of the inhabitants afflicted with goitrous swellings. In some cases the protuberances were almost the size of a football, and were so heavy that it was found necessary to support them by means of tapes. To me it appeared that these goitres were due to the presence of alum in the river-water which the people were in the habit of drinking; but the natives ascribed them to the anger of the Naiads; and with a view to propitiating these water nymphs they used to place small cups of sweetened milk outside on the door-steps at night. If in the morning the cup was found empty, it was well for the house; but if the cup remained full—which was seldom the case, as there were many dogs in the village—the master of the house grew very uneasy

in mind, and knew no rest till the Naiads had partaken of his offering.

Indian superstitions and beliefs.

"When man seized the loadstone of science, the loadstar of superstition vanished in the clouds." Such has been the case, generally speaking, in the West; but in the gloom of the East the loadstar of superstition still burns as brightly as ever.

The native is an avowed fatalist, and a living contradiction. He professes the doctrine of "Kismet" (fate) and "Taqdir" (destiny); yet, if he is a follower of the Prophet, he will pray five times a day; while, if he be a Hindu, he will journey long distances to immerse himself in the waters of the holy Ganga, and will garland Mahadeo with flowers. He professes to believe that whatever happens here below has been pre-ordained, and yet he hedges himself in with

a multitude of superstitions in which he has implicit faith, and which act as signposts on his way through life.

Born in the murky atmosphere of the East, of idolatrous or fatalistic parents, he remains tinctured with superstition all through life, whether his lines be cast in the busy streets of some smoke-girdled city or in a quiet rural home ; for the superstition in which we have grown up does not lose its hold over us even when we recognize it for such.

In his childhood, as he toddles out to tend his father's herd or goes slouching through the dust to school, he picks up a knowledge of the signs of the road, and learns to discriminate between good and bad omens. If he be a son of the Prophet, and a pig should cross his path, he will instantly make a detour, because pigs are loathsome animals and unlucky ; but, strange to say, should he

THE GODDESS DURGA. [*To face p.* 252

happen upon a funeral-party on its way he will rejoice, for it is looked upon as a good omen, and success will be sure to crown his undertaking. He will strain his eyes to descry the faint sickle of the new moon on the first day of her appearance, because she is said to bring fortune in her train ; but failure on his part will consign him to a whole month's sorrow and trouble, both for himself and his family.

If he be a Hindu he will soon learn to read the signs of the road, and will allow himself to be swayed by them. The number of such signs is beyond computation, but a few may be mentioned here. If a crow should caw on his left, or should he be fortunate enough to meet a woman carrying an infant in her arms, he will find cause for self-congratulation ; but the sight of two Brahmins poring over a book will instantly cast him into a deep fit of

despondency. A blue jay on his left or a deer on his right will act upon his system like a stimulant, bringing a brightness to his eye and an elasticity to his step; but should a black snake, a fox, or a jackal cross his path some terrible affliction will follow. If within the first six miles of his journey he should encounter a person with cross-eyes or having one eye blind he will immediately retrace his steps, calling to mind the advice contained in the lines—

"Tin kos tak, millé jo kana,
Lowt ai wo barra siana.
Kane ne, khare, kari pokar,
'Aincha-tané se raho hushiar.'"

Which might be freely translated as follows—

"Six miles within, One-eye you meet,
Be wise in time and beat retreat.
But in his turn the Cyclops cries,
'Beware of him who hath cross-eyes.'"

A monkey on his path in the morning will bring him misfortune, unless he takes the

precaution to close his eyes and ignore its presence. He must not under any circumstances take the name "Monkey" before his first meal, or he will go hungry throughout the day; for has not Tulsi Das, the Goshain sage, said—

> "Pirat le jo nam hamara,
> Ta din tahé na millé ahara"?

and Tulsi Das ought to know.

Should necessity compel him to take the road by night he will peer through the darkness for the night signals, and will try to get a peep into the future by means of the birds. If a bird, roused from its slumbers by his trespassing footfalls, should flutter away into the darkness and then return to the same roost, he will go on his way rejoicing; for his future is assured. Some day he will command the respect due to a Taluqdar or mount the throne of a raja.

Having graduated during his childhood in the lesser superstitions, he will next turn his attention to the more complicated. We will say he is a Mahomedan, has reached the age of puberty, and desires marriage. His mother will carefully examine the girl selected, and subject her to the closest scrutiny, and if she should discover any of the hundred and one unlucky marks common to the fair sex, she will immediately reject her. The unluckiest of all unlucky marks on women is, perhaps, the *sampin bhowrie*, a mark caused by a peculiar formation of the hair on the forehead, and supposed to resemble the head of a snake in outline. A woman carrying this brand is doomed to widowhood, and will outlive as many husbands as her relatives care to give her. A native friend of mine once told me that he had narrowly escaped being married to a girl with this mark. His mother detected

the fatal sign in time, and so saved him. Later, the girl was married to a man of his acquaintance, and a few months after the marriage her husband died.

A bride having been selected, he will next turn his attention to a suitable habitation. The house must not have a southern aspect, because the genii dwell in that direction and will sooner or later take possession of the building. Once having gained an entrance, no power on earth will expel these evil spirits. They will haunt and molest the tenants, will kill their children, and import all manner of diseases. This superstition is shared by both Mahomedans and Hindus.

Having selected a suitable house for his future home, he will, perhaps, next set about beautifying the courtyard with ornamental shrubs and flowers. Now, if he is a follower of the "Quran" he will eschew the

pomegranate, guava, *chimbeli*, and *raibail*; while if Sita be the object of his worship, he will cultivate marigolds and the sweet basil. Next comes the marriage. The astrologers are consulted and a date is appointed, but every fifth day is banned, reckoning from the third day of each month, and Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays are best avoided. Then follows a journey. The groom must hasten home to fetch his smiling bride, or maybe he is bringing her back to the house he has prepared for her. An auspicious day must be chosen for the journey. Instantly, if he is a follower of the Prophet, he will recall to mind the couplet learnt in the days of his childhood—

'Shurk dur shamba, do shamba; jumma, ekshamba garoob.
Se chaharo dur shimalo! punjshamba dur janoob."

Which means that you should not travel east

on Saturdays and Mondays; west on Fridays and Sundays; north on Tuesdays and Wednesdays; and south on Thursdays.

The Hindus have the same superstition, but expressed in Hindi—

"Som, Sanechar, purab ne chaloo;
Mangal, Budh, utar dis kaloo;
Jumma, Itwar, pacham ne chaloo;
Dakhin befé hai manaloo."

But it may so happen that circumstances over which he has no control compel a native to begin his journey on one of the unlucky days. Now what is to be done? Does he lose heart? Not at all. He holds the key to the trouble in the magic word *patrap* —the "open sesame" which unbars the door of his difficulties and allows him to emerge a happy man. He has not the pluck to stand up to his shadowy foes, so seeks safety in strategy. Selecting one of the lucky days, he dons the costume of a traveller, and with

scrip and staff and the hearty good-byes of his friends and relatives he sets out ostensibly for a long journey, but in reality does not go very far. He calls at the house of a friend, and after depositing a part of his baggage there, returns to his home by a circuitous route. Thus, he fondly imagines, he has succeeded in hoodwinking the spirits of darkness; and when it suits his convenience he resumes his journey regardless of the day of the week. This sham journey and the leaving of baggage is called *patrap*.

He will now proceed with the marriage with a clear conscience, but there are still many pitfalls in his path, for if any of his children should happen to be born on a Monday, Wednesday, or Saturday, or in the afternoon, the advent of the little one is more likely to prove a curse than a blessing.

In selecting a horse he will study the

markings of the animal more closely than its soundness and strength. An animal with a black palate, or one marked with the *mainda singi*—a spot on the forehead supposed to resemble a frog in contour—will be unconditionally rejected. A *sitara-peshani*—a star on the forehead which may be covered by the thumb—or a patch of white between the forelegs, called *hardawal*, are reckoned unlucky marks, and will condemn an otherwise suitable beast.

A superstition is also attached to horses with one white stocking, termed *arjol;* and to those with the *sampin bhowrie* on the neck; but in the latter case, if the mark occurs on both sides the purchaser need fear no evil consequences.

Cattle also display a variety of marks and signs to which superstition has attached significance. For instance, an animal in the

habit of constantly shaking its head is considered *manhus*, i. e. possessed of evil spirits.

And so throughout his life, from the time he learns to babble to the time he is laid in his grave or on the funeral pyre, the native has one long fight with a countless host of malignant and shadowy beings, who appear to be ever on the watch to take him at a disadvantage.

A sad story.

A sad story was told me yesterday about a family of natives well known to me. The family consisted of three members—an old widow and her two sons. The elder brother was a clerk in the collector's office, and the younger was still at school. The former sickened of a fever and died last Thursday, and they carried the body down to the river to burn. Now it is the custom for the nearest male relative—a son when there is one—to smash open the skull of the corpse while

it is burning, for it is believed that the spirit resides in the head, and unless it is freed and allowed to escape it will continue to haunt the skull, wherever that skull may be taken by the dogs and jackals. In this case it was the brother's duty to perform the office of skull-smasher; but he was a delicate and nervous lad, and when, after a great deal of hesitation, he lifted the heavy staff and struck the blow, the weight of the staff took him over, and before the rest of the party could come to his assistance—they were seated in a group, smoking, some fifty paces off—he was burnt. When the tragic news reached the poor old mother she fell down in a swoon, and was dead before the ashes of her sons had grown cold.

Coming winter.

The monsoon is now quite over, and the sky is a fleckless blue. In the garden the lilies and jasmine are still in flower, and are

daily visited by an ever-increasing number of butterflies, or "flutterbyes," as Sonny Baba loves to call them.

Turning to the trees, I find them all wrapped against the coming cold in coats of heavy foliage; the shadows of the *nîms* looking like patches of ink upon the greensward.

The evenings close in quite early now; the morning breeze is refreshingly cool; the dew at night falls heavy; the voice of the brain-fever bird has at last been stilled; the winter is at hand, and with it, for the white man, Life and Strength and Hope.

OUR TENT HOME.

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# EPILOGUE

NOVEMBER 1907

As this book is going to press, FAMINE, the dread horror of the countryside, is once more abroad. There has been no rain for three months, and this, following upon an insufficient monsoon, has plunged the country into the bitterness of distress. The autumn harvest has been a total failure, and unless the winter rains come quickly—come even as this book reaches the hands of any who care to read of rural India—there will—there must—be a severe famine. The Government, watchful, merciful, is doing its best; but it is not in human power to prevent famines in a vast agricultural

country, dependent for the most part on periodical rains. Alleviation alone is possible.[1] Money advances are being made for the sinking of wells and for the purchase of seed; but, alas! even here there is a check. The *mahajan* (money-lender) is secretly at work, and is snatching as much of these advances as he can even from the helpless widow and the orphan. A widow complained the other day that the village *mahajan* had forcibly taken from her the money that had been advanced to her for seed. An inquiry was made. The *mahajan*

[1] The bare figures are as follow :—

| | £ | |
|---|---|---|
| *Estimated State Expenditure in Famine Relief* (1) To end of April, 1908 | 800,000 | |
| (2) For the year 1908–9 | 2,300,000 | |
| | £3,100,000 | |
| *Loans to the Peasantry* | | |
| (1) To end of April, 1908 | 1,300,000 | |
| (2) For the year 1908–9 | 1,000,000 | |
| | £2,300,000 | Total, £7,700,000 |
| *Loss of Land Revenue and Remissions* | | |
| (1) To end of April, 1908 | 1,500,000 | |
| (2) For the year 1908–9 | 800,000 | |
| | £2,300,000 | |

denied the charge, but stated that the woman owed him seventy-eight rupees. The Bond was called for. After making all manner of excuses he complied with the order; and it was then discovered that the original debt was only seventeen rupees, the balance interest! As regards the charge, not a single person in the village would come forward to give evidence against the money-lender, as they were all *in* debt to him and he had them in his power.

Is it possible for people living under such conditions to prosper?

Nevertheless, Ram Bux is making a brave struggle against the drought. As soon as the day breaks he drives his oxen to the well, and there remains till nightfall. He has a reputation for being lazy; but I think this is somewhat undeserved; for if you chance to visit the fields at any hour

during the day-time you will find him there at work. True, he is a slow worker; but that is not wholly his fault. The climate of the Tropics is not conducive to energy; his food is insufficient and of poor quality; the implements he uses are of an immemorial antiquity. But this winter, now, he is working right manfully. Apart from the anxiety and extra labour which drought entails, he has many other troubles and worries of which we know but little; yet he is always cheerful and seldom complains. To meet the drought he has had to sink wells, and as soon as the water in one well runs out he proceeds to dig another. The fields at present are dotted over with little sand mounds, each marking the position of a new well, and daily the number of these mounds increases. The soil being so hard and dry, liberal watering is necessary before the seed

can be sown. Sowing operations under such conditions are long and laborious; but, bit by bit, the work is being done, and already the young wheat-shoots are showing above the surface. The people were hard hit last spring by unseasonable rain; they looked forward with hope to the autumn; but the autumn has come and gone and they are in a worse plight still. I have recently ridden through miles of burnt and blighted crops, and wherever I have stopped, at village or well, the same cry, "*Murra jata hai, sahib; murra jata*" ("We are dying, sahib, we are dying"), has reached my ears, in the most piteous accents.

As I came along this very morning I found whole villages deserted. Every man, woman, and child had gone out to work in the fields, the men to plough and dig, the children to sow, and the women to draw

the water from the well. At one village I saw a little boy, about six years old, seated fearlessly at the well mouth, emptying the great leather bucket as it rose from the yawning depths to the surface. His father was busy ploughing, his mother was harnessed to the well rope, and his little sister was seated in his lap! And so they work from morning to nightfall—father, mother, and child—with no midday meal, and nothing but stale unleavened bread and water to sustain them throughout the long hours of their toil.

When I see the beautiful crops fading for want of a little moisture, and Ram Bux patiently waiting, patiently crying out to his gods to wake from their long slumber, my heart yearns to be able to assist him. He may be indolent and many things that are bad, but all just-minded people must

SONNY BABA AND HIS TOY TENT—RECEIVING A VISITOR. [*To face p.* 270

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allow that, all things considered, he makes a very fair fight against opposing evils. All night long he sits up battling with the marauding denizens of the jungles, and from sunrise to cattle-dust his time is spent screaming off the birds and in tending his fields; and wherever he looks he is conscious of being watched by a pair of sharp, crafty eyes—the eyes of the money-lender, whose bond-slave he is.

*November* 15, 1907.

# INDIA.

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